

I Suffer Not A Woman

by Dan Mace

Part 1 Audio Transcript of the teaching series with the above title.

Well, tonight I'm going to talk about something very controversial. So tighten your seat belts. What I share will probably stir up a hornet's nest, but I think it's about time someone tackled this issue and took a stand for the truth.

Hopefully, there will be some who hear this word who are not so cemented in their views and positions that they automatically reject it out of hand. Hopefully, some who hear what I share will go back to the Scripture and take a long, hard (an honest) look at the issue from the perspective of the *whole counsel* of God's Word, and not just from the perspective of a few "key" verses that are so often quoted.

So as we get into this, I'm not going start off by trying to explain why I believe these key verses don't really mean what so many ministers claim they mean. Rather, I'm gong to approach the issue from a completely different direction.

In the New Testament, there are *ninety* church leaders mentioned by name. Of that number, depending on how you view them and what Bible translation you uses, twenty of these names were women. In Romans chapter sixteen, Paul greets twenty-six people by name, as well as several unnamed; and the churches that were meeting in homes. He closes the book of Romans with greetings from nine believers who were with him in Corinth when he wrote the letter. Please notice in the following verse the names of two people:

*Salute Andronicus and **Junia**, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. (Romans 16:7)*

A very *insignificant* statement, is it not? Paul simply mentions two people who "are of note among the apostles". But more books and doctrinal essays

have been written about these two people, and about what Paul really meant here, than you can imagine. This little verse that seems so insignificant has caused a fire storm of controversy in Seminaries and Bible Colleges for centuries. Do you know why?

The reason is because “Junia” is the name of a *woman*; and it seems like Paul is calling this women an “apostle”. If this is the case, people who have been confidently boasting that God would never put a woman in a position of spiritual authority are dead wrong. Naturally, scholars have been deeply divided regarding the correct interpretation what Paul said here. The women-can-preach camp maintains that Junia was both a woman and an apostle. The no-women-in-authority camp have attempted to prove that Junia was a man; or if they can’t accomplish that, they at least try to show that Paul wasn’t really saying these two people were actually apostles, but were merely *known by* the apostles. So the first issue that must be resolved is *the gender* of the person named Iounian. The second issue that needs to be resolved is the correct interpretation of the Greek phrase: “*episemoi en tois apostolois* (ie: “of note among the apostles”).

When you begin to look at this whole issue, the first thing you will notice is that it makes a big difference which Bible translation you use. If you are using the King James, the New King James, or the New Revised Standard Version, the name you will see is “Junia”, which is a female name. If you are reading the New International, the New American Standard, or various other versions, the name you will see is “Junias”, which is a male name.

This is because *Iounian* appears only once in the Greek New Testament, and it can translated as male (Junianus; or Junias in its contracted form), or female (Junia), depending on where the accent is located. The way it was translated depended entirely on the *theological views* of the translators. Those who were biased against women in ministry translated it as Junias; while those not so biased translated it as Junia. After looking at both sides of the argument, I believe Junia was indeed a woman, and that Paul said she was an apostle.

~ The female name, Junia, occurs more than 250 times in ancient Greek and Latin texts, while the (purported) male name, Junias, is not attested anywhere.

~ For the first seven centuries of the church's life, Greek manuscripts did not use accents. However, when accents did become common practice in the manuscript tradition, without exception they identified the name as feminine. There is no suggestion in Christian writers of the first thousand years of the church's life, or for several centuries later, that the person in question was a man. All extant early translations of the New Testament transcribe the name as a feminine form. With only one exception, Greek New Testaments from that of Erasmus in 1516 to Erwin Nestle's edition of 1927 print the name with the accent that indicates the feminine form.

~ It's common knowledge that the church fathers were not exactly "women's libbers"! Their attitude towards women could be described as negative *at best*. Yet despite their negative attitude towards women, theologians as diverse as Origen, Ambrosiaster, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, John Damascene, Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard, all assume that the partner of Andronicus is a woman by the name of Junia. Chrysostom, who lived in the 4th century, wrote: "*Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle*"! (Homily on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans XXXI).

In view of this overwhelming evidence in favor of understanding the name in question to be that of a woman, why have so many scholars come to the conclusion that Junia was a man? The answer is easy. The person in question is not only described as an apostle, but as an a "prominent" apostle. The attitude of biased translators is logical and simple: Since a woman could not have been an apostle, the woman who is here called apostle could not have been a woman!

The second question regarding this passage is whether Andronicus and Junia were actually apostles, or just highly regarded "by" the apostles. Grammatically, some scholars say both meanings are possible. But it is interesting to note that while different Bible translations are divided on how to translate *Iouinian* (whether male or female), they all basically agree concerning the meaning of *episemoi en tois apostolois*. The Greek term "en", which means "among", is used over 90 times in the New Testament and the vast majority of those times it means *to be part of* something or some group. To be "among" the apostles meant just that: to be among them; to be one of them.

Just this one verse would give some *much needed* balance to the all-too-familiar passages that are continually bandied about in defense of depriving the sisters of any real ministry to the body of Christ—but there are other passages too.

Those who talk so righteously about women not teaching men choose to remain ignorant of many well established facts, both from with the Scripture, and from Church History. It is not at strange for God to use women in very prominent roles among His people.

I already mentioned *Deborah*, who was a prophet of God, a judge over Israel for 40 years, and a general over Israel's army (Judges 4:4-5). How much spiritual authority do you think comes with the office of prophet, judge and general? Quite a bit, I would assume!

Several other female prophets are mentioned in the Old Testament—*Miriam* (Ex. 15:20), *Huldah* (II. Kings 22:14; II. Chron. 34:22), and *Noadiah* (Neh. 6:14). We also see a husband and wife *team* of prophets—Isaiah and his wife (Isa. 8:3). In Huldah's day, the male High Priest sought her counsel and the people of Israel—including the men, God forbid!—came to her to receive the word of the Lord, just like they did from any other prophet. How much “spiritual authority” do you think her ministry carried? Again, the answer is quite a bit.

The prophet Joel talked about a time when both "your sons *and daughters* will prophesy... and even on the male *and female* servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). We see this fulfilled in the New Testament through the *four daughters* of Philip (Acts 21:9). And don't forget *Anna* who was a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36).

If we are honest, we will have to admit that these women were granted spiritual authority by God Himself, to guide, to instruct, to lead, and even (God forbid!!) to govern men. Now turn with me to Acts, chapter eighteen.

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak

*boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla **and** Aquila heard him, **they** took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. (Act 18:24-26)*

Apollos was not an ignorant, unbelieving Gentile pagan. He was a Jew; he was mighty in the Scripture; he was an eloquent speaker, he was fervent in spirit; he had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and he taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. I would say that qualified him as being a minister with spiritual authority. But he had need of further spiritual equipping. So the Lord sent him a man and wife *team* of ministers named Priscilla and Aquila. Paul says **THEY** took Apollos aside and expounded unto him the way of salvation more accurately. That means they **BOTH** “taught” Apollos.

If Paul would have had the attitude that so many men have today, where they are always making sure they don’t let a women “teach” them anything, you can be sure he would have singled out Aquila (the Husband) when recounting who it was that *instructed* Apollos.

*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is **a servant** of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for **she hath been a succourer** of many, and of myself also. (Romans 16:1-2)*

Phebe being said to be simply “a servant” is (I believe) another example of women in leadership. Phoebe was much more than a “servant”. Paul’s word translated here as “servant” is the word for “*deacon*”, which is translated as such in his letter to the Philippians (1:1). Phoebe was an official in the same way that this word is used of elders, bishops and ministers. The word used of her is the same word Paul used *of himself* and others in ministry who preached Jesus Christ (I. Cor 3:5; Col 1:23).

Phoebe came from Cenchrea, which was the port of Corinth and she was probably won to Christ during Paul’s year and a half ministry in Corinth. Paul goes on to say that she was someone *special*. She had been a “succourer” of himself and other Christians. The English word succourer is a translation of the Greek word: “*prostatis*” (pros-tat'-is), which means a

patroness or a protectress. In Latin the word is “patronus”, and it speaks of the *legal* representative of the foreigner.

So Phoebe somehow was the legal protector of the Christians at Cenchrea. In the Old Testament, this noun is used of officials in charge of the work of the King (I. Chron 29:6) and of chief officers “*who ruled over the people*” (II. Chron 8:10). In its verb form the word means “to be at the head of, *to rule*, to direct” and it is used of those who “rule” in the church (Rom 12:8; I. Thess 5:12; I. Tim 5:17). What all this means is that Phoebe was a woman in the early church holding a position of leadership, and who used her influence to help Paul. She was exercising a ministry of leadership.

I don’t have time to go through all the various verses which expose the current attitude towards women as bankrupt, but they are there, I assure you. It’s just like the Eternal Security delusion. People can cut and paste together all kinds of verses to make a (supposedly) iron-clad case for Eternal Security. But the fact is, Paul and the other apostles were constantly making all kinds of statements that, while not directly addressing that issue, nevertheless *destroy* the whole idea of Eternal Security. For example: in several places Paul states he was wondering if the ones who had accepted the Gospel under his ministry, were still in the faith. Such a question demonstrates that he did not believe they were eternally secure. The very fact that he warns people who he believes are true Christians about *not* falling away, reveals that he did not believe in Eternal Security. You can’t hide the little expressions that are all through his letters, which show that he did not believe, or teach, the lie of Eternal Security.

It’s the same way with the I-suffer-not-a-woman-to-teach error. You can quote *I. Cor. 14:35* and *I. Tim. 2:11-12* all you want. But you will never be able to hide Paul’s true view of women in ministry because it comes out in *unguarded* statements. If Paul had the attitude that so many of today’s men have, he would not have been caught dead saying some of the things he said in the course of his everyday, casual conversation.

Just like today’s men do, he would have been *very careful* with his words. He would have made sure that nothing he said could possibly be construed as an approval for women ministering to men, or women have any kind of spiritual authority over men. But the fact is, just the opposite is the case. Paul makes all kinds of statements that reveal that he is not like today’s men.

If your heart is open to the truth, you will begin to see Paul's true attitude as you read the New Testament.

*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is **neither male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-28)*