

# **The Position Of Women**

## ***In The Church***

- I. The Scriptural basis for the position of women***
- II. What God's Word says concerning women's role in the church***
- III. Arguments contrary to the Bible and their consequences***
- IV. The glorious task God has given to women in the church.***

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## THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

- I. THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE POSITION OF WOMEN;
- II. WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS CONCERNING WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH;
- III. ARGUMENTS CONTRARY TO THE BIBLE AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES;
- IV. THE GLORIOUS TASK GOD HAS GIVEN TO WOMEN IN THE CHURCH.

The last one hundred years has seen a massive change both in the world in general, but particularly in the visible church. Though there have been many advances in scientific endeavours and their resultant improvement of the lives of many outwardly, this has been paralleled with a sad decline of men's lives morally and spiritually. Also the visible church, rather than being assisted by science to spread the pure Word of God to others, has allowed man's reason to question and rebel against God's Word, thus becoming doctrinally decadent and deserving of God's wrath as He states in the letter to Laodicea, (Rev. 3:16), "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." One of the many evil movements within the visible church is that which has taken the woman from her rightful position, and denied to her the true blessing and glory which obedience to God's Word provides.

Today women pastors are quite readily accepted within the Anglican, Uniting and most Pentecostal churches. It is not strange to see both husband and wife pastoring in some Pentecostal congregations. "Women are equal in society; why should they not be given equal authority and responsibility in the church?" they say. Women are allowed to take part in the governing of the congregation, and are even given leadership positions within the church. Even many Lutheran churches in the United States, Sweden and other European countries have permitted women to become pastors.

Particularly during the 1960's this spiritual rot really set in within many Lutheran churches. This was the time when women's equality and women's liberation movements began to grow in power. "For too long the woman has been treated like a slave," they said. "It is time that we make the changes necessary that she may in all things be equal to the man." It was at this time that most churches allowed the practice of the wearing of the head covering in the public worship service to wane, claiming that it was merely a custom. Shortly after this the denial of women the right to vote and speak in the congregation (woman suffrage) began to be questioned. In 1969, the convention of the Missouri Synod at Denver officially changed their position, now allowing congregations to accept women to vote and speak in their midst.

It was shortly after the union to form the LCA in 1966 in Australia, that it also changed its position on the matter. Though within the former ELCA a strong position had been taken against woman suffrage, once the merger had occurred, strong pressure was brought for the new church to change its position on the matter. Despite opposition from conservative pastors, this change soon took place, allowing women to take part in congregational meetings, serve as delegates to Convention, become elders of congregations, and even take leading positions in the worship services of congregations. However it was still officially stated by the LCA as late as 1984:

"In view of Scriptural teaching on the office of the ministry,.... any position entailing the pastoral office cannot be considered legitimate spheres for the service of women." (Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the LCA, p.F3).

However over recent years as the leaven of false doctrine continues to spread, there has been much debate in the LCA on the matter of women becoming pastors. Papers have been placed before the church promoting arguments for and against the matter. Though there are many pastors and lay people against women as pastors, some even threatening to leave the church if

it is accepted, the movement in favour is very large, threatening to overwhelm whatever resistance may still exist. The matter is coming up for discussion at the year 2000 Convention. Will the LCA now adopt a new course regarding women pastors at the beginning of the "new millennium"?

There is an ever-present danger that in the ELCR Satan will do what he can to introduce the sinful ideas of the world. Many of the older generation who lived through the time of tribulation of our formation have now passed to their eternal rest. Unless the younger generation adopt the same spirit of love for God's Word, loyalty to pure Lutheran teaching and hatred of all false doctrine and practice, Satan will also easily introduce his poison of false doctrine into our midst.

In this matter the Bible has spoken clearly. Many have tried to rid themselves of the passages which make them feel uncomfortable before the world. But the directives of the Lord remain nevertheless. Are we prepared to listen to, and from faith obey them? In order therefore to increase our knowledge on this matter, let us study:

## **THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

**We shall see:**

- I. THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE POSITION OF WOMEN;**
- II. WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS CONCERNING WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH;**
- III. ARGUMENTS CONTRARY TO THE BIBLE AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES;**
- IV. THE GLORIOUS TASK GOD HAS GIVEN TO WOMEN IN THE CHURCH.**

### **I.**

## **THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE POSITION OF WOMEN**

### **THE CREATION OF ADAM AND EVE**

The roles of man and woman toward each other are a part of God's eternal Moral Law. Not only were they therefore written in man's heart, but were also laid down by God at Creation. God created man first, then from his side He made the woman (Gen. 1:21-23). In connection with this, God called Eve the "helpmeet" (Hebrew: helper, assistant) of Adam. Adam needed not only a companion, but someone to assist him with his responsibilities. Since the heart of mankind was perfect, there was never any thought of rebellion, but it was at all times a joy for Eve to assist her husband as God willed it of her.

### **MAN'S FALL INTO SIN**

The saddest event in this world's history then occurred as Eve, tempted of the devil, ate of the forbidden fruit, and enticing her husband to eat also, fell into sin. Now Eve's sinful heart would encourage her to rebel against the wishes of her husband, so that her help to him would not always come from a willing heart. Therefore the Lord stated to Eve His will for her in even clearer terms in Gen. 3:16, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Eve's will was to be subject to, obedient to, that of her husband. Adam's position was one of rulership over his wife, not to treat her as a slave, but to lovingly care for her needs.

That these principles were not just to apply to Adam and Eve, but are applicable to the whole of mankind is made clear by the fact that they are repeated in the New Testament. In laying down the divine command concerning the wearing of the head-covering, St. Paul bases this upon the headship of the man over the woman (1 Cor. 11:3-5), and the divine order of Creation, first the man, then the woman (1 Cor. 11:9). Also Paul, in giving the command for the woman to be in

silence, gives the reasons as, "Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2 :13-14). Here the Apostle uses these principles laid down at creation as the basis of explaining God's will to his hearers.

Therefore God's will is made clear right from the origin of the human race, that man is the head of the woman, and that the woman is to be in subjection to her husband.

### **IN THE HOME**

That the woman is to be subject to her husband is clearly explained in many plain passages of the Bible (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-2; Titus 2:5; Col. 3:18; Esther 1:20-22). Also the wonderful example of Sarah is placed before us (1 Peter 3:5-6), "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." That the husband is not to treat his wife like a slave to be ordered around at will is made quite clear by those passages which command him to love his wife, to care for her and to treat her with respect (Eph. 5:25; 1 Peter 3:7; Eccl. 9:9).

### **IN THE STATE**

We know of no specific Bible passages which forbid the woman either taking public office in the state, taking a leadership position in Government, or exercising her right to vote in a government election. Therefore, as long as she fulfills her responsibilities in the home to her husband and to her children, we do not believe she is sinning in taking such a position. If this were the case, the Christian woman would be sinning by taking her vote in government elections and by taking any position of authority in government with men under her authority. As well, the Christian would be in duty bound to refuse obedience and loyalty to the Queen, or any other woman in a position of governmental authority.

However since God has given to man the position of authority in the home and in the church, it is only proper that also the state should be man's concern so that the proper respect for godly manhood be cultivated. Scripture speaks of it as a shame to the Israelites when they allowed themselves to be ruled by women in positions of worldly authority (Isaiah 3:12). So it is a disappointment to a country today when God-fearing men do not step forward and fulfil their natural leadership role also in the state. Nevertheless, where women are in governmental authority, as happened also in the Old Testament (e.g. Deborah, Judges 4, 5), such are to be given honour and obedience as the Lord commands (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Titus 3:1).

### **BUT ARE NOT ALL, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, EQUAL BEFORE GOD?**

In the spiritual sphere, in matters connected with our salvation, all are equal, men, women and children. All are equally born in sin, under God's curse, and without Christ lost forever in eternity (Rom. 3:23). Both men and women are saved, not by their good works, but alone by faith in Christ the Saviour of the world (2 Cor. 5:19). So the Apostle Paul points out in Gal. 3:26, 28, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.... 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." Again the Lord Himself stated, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23:8). Again the Apostle Peter states under inspiration concerning both husbands and wives that they are, "heirs together of the grace of life." (1 Peter 3:7). Such is the case in the spiritual sphere, of redemption.

But there is also an earthly sphere, that of God's creation, where He has given to man and woman different duties and responsibilities. In their earthly conduct in this world, man and woman, though equal so far as salvation is concerned, have been made subject to God's ordinances, in church, state and home. In a similar manner God has asked of Christian children, though they share the same spiritual home in heaven as their parents, while they are

in this world gladly to show their parents obedience, honour and respect as the Scriptures require. The Christian wife, realizing the happy home that God has prepared for her and all believers, will out of thankfulness submit herself to God's will in all matters in which His Word has spoken. The man on the other hand will not use his earthly position of authority either to treat the woman as a slave with disrespect, nor to arrogantly presume for himself a higher spiritual position in God's Kingdom.

All, both men and women, gladly serve their Master, Christ, in whatever role the Lord places them in this world.

## II.

### WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS CONCERNING WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

There are two chief Bible passages which speak directly on this matter. They are 1 Cor. 14:34-35, and 2 Tim. 2:11-15.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

This text answers the following questions:

- a. What is the woman commanded to do? She is commanded to “keep silence” (Greek: to begin and keep on being in silence). She is “not permitted” (allowed by God) “to speak” (Greek: to declare one's mind, disclose one's thoughts, to express oneself). She is also “commanded to be under obedience” (be putting herself under subjection).
- b. Where is she commanded to do this? This command is to take place “in the churches” (v. 34) and “in the church” (v.35). The word “church” here refers to the congregation assembled for worship and the governmental meeting of the congregation. The whole context of 1 Cor. 11-14 deals with their “coming together in the church” (1 Cor. 11:18), that is, the meeting for public worship. It is in these chapters that the Apostle deals with such matters as the wearing of the head covering, the Lord's supper, speaking in tongues, and the silence of women, all of which take place in the public worship service.
- c. Why is she commanded to do this? Two reasons are given. Firstly, “As also saith the Law.” The Moral Law of God forbids the woman from speaking in the church and commands her to be under obedience. This is a reference to the order laid down by God at Creation (Gen. 2:18) and repeated after the fall into sin (Gen. 3:16).

Secondly, “it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” If a shame or disgrace, it is also a sin since to bring shame upon oneself is also to shame the Creator, God Himself.

- d. But what if the woman has questions she wishes to publicly voice in the worship service and or in the congregational meeting? Our text answers, “If they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home.”

From this passage it is clear that the woman is not in the worship service or the congregational meeting to speak publicly, or to express her will. Rather she is to show her obedience and subjection to the man by being in silence.

Note also in the following two verses, the Apostle challenges the Corinthians, “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of

the Lord.” There were some who were rebellious amongst them, and were not abiding by God's will in the matter. Arrogantly they thought they could decide for themselves what they wished to do, thinking that God's Word originated from them. Such should remember that they were not just challenging Paul, but they were challenging the authority of God, because Paul's writings were the commandments of God.

How dare the church at large today take a similar attitude to these commands and arrogantly say they no longer apply to us? Are we not in duty bound from faith to give them the same obedience as Paul required of the Corinthians?

Thus Luther writes concerning this passage,

“To teach in public is an exercise of a certain kind of lordship in the place of Christ.... At home they (women) may instruct their own, as far as they know and can.” (Quoted in “Women in the Church, P. Lindemann, p.29).

And again,

“All may proclaim God's Word except that women are not to speak in the Church but should let the men preach, because of the command that they are to be subject to their husbands, as St. Paul teaches us (1 Cor. 14:35)”. (What Luther Says, Vol 3, No. 3348).

#### **1 TIMOTHY 2:11-14**

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”

- a. What does Paul here command? The woman is to “learn” (Greek: to begin and keep on increasing her knowledge through instruction) in silence (Greek: saying nothing, holding her peace) with all subjection. She is not allowed to teach (Greek: to be a teacher). Nor is she to “usurp authority over” (Greek: to exercise dominion over, to govern) the man, “but to be in silence.”
- b. Where is this commanded? Unlike in 1 Cor. 14:34-35, the term “church” is not specifically used here. However in the context, verses 1, 2 and 8 speak of the prayers to be offered up by the congregation in the public worship services. In 1 Tim. 2:8 we learn, “I will therefore that men (Greek: the men) pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” The Greek specifies “the men,” the word distinguishing the males as the authority and leaders in the church, to offer up this public prayer. Therefore we apply the words of verses 11 and 12 to the same place as those of 1 Cor. 14, the public worship service of the congregation, and the congregation gathered together for its governmental meeting.
- c. What are the reasons for this command? This is clearly stated as the Order of Creation, “Adam was first formed, then Eve.” In 1 Cor. 11:8-9, this is also used as one of the reasons for the command concerning the wearing of the head covering. Secondly, the woman was first deceived, then she tempted Adam (verse 14). Woman is described in Scripture as being also vulnerable to deception and temptation, as shown in the first temptation where Satan overcame not the man but the woman (Gen. 3:16; Eccl. 7:25-28). For this reason she is to be under man's authority as commanded in Gen. 3:16, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.”
- d. What of the woman voting in the meeting of the congregation? Though this is not specifically spoken of in the text, it is forbidden by the command that the woman is not “to usurp authority over the man.”

The casting of a vote is an act of power and authority, whereby a person expresses his will on a certain matter. If there were no voting in matters not decided by Scripture, there would be no authority, no means of determining what the will of the congregation is. However voting is the means whereby decisions are made. If the woman were to cast a vote in the congregational meeting, she would be pitting her will against that of the man, at the least placing it on equal authority with that of the man. If a number of women in the congregation were to exercise their vote, they could influence the decision of the congregation, therefore exercising authority over the man. It is this which is forbidden by these passages of the Scripture.

In further proof of this, Webster's Dictionary defines "vote" as:

"that by which will or preference is expressed in elections or in deciding proposals;.... to express or signify the mind, will or preference." (p.941).

Dr. W.H.T. Dau states,

"When a woman casts her vote, she does not merely express a wish.... What happens at the casting of a vote is regarded as an act of sovereignty, by which someone declares his will and proposes to realise his will."

Dr. Luther writes,

"The Holy Ghost has excluded women from the GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH." (S.L. XVI: 2280).

From these Scripture passages, we then draw the following general principles:

1. The woman is not to vote or speak in the congregational meeting;
2. The woman is not to publicly teach in, or be a leader of the public worship service, whether it be preaching, leading in prayer, taking of liturgy, or giving a public testimony of her faith. (The Bible does not prohibit a woman from confessing her faith in a Confirmation Examination, under the direction of a Pastor.);
3. The woman is not to be a public teacher of God's Word of male adults in the congregation;
4. This also prohibits a woman from becoming a pastor because all of these roles are involved in the work of a pastor.

Note that these passages do not forbid the woman from participating in the worship of the congregation, in singing and public prayer, since she also is a spiritual priest (1 Peter 2:9) and is also commanded to praise God (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). Nor do they forbid a woman from explaining God's Word in private (1 Peter 3:15), as we learn Priscilla did to Apollos (Acts 18:28). Likewise they do not forbid her being a Sunday School teacher since women are commanded to teach other women and girls (Titus 2:3-4), and commended for teaching little children the Word of God (2 Tim. 1:5). These are a part of the many ways that God-fearing women can faithfully serve God in their lives.

## **EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE**

In the several examples in Scripture of the vote being taken in the local congregation, it is exclusively the right of men. When the Apostles needed to appoint a replacement for Judas, Peter stood up and directed the matter to "men and brethren" (Acts 1:16) there present, even though we are told women were present there as well (Acts 1:14). Likewise, when the Jerusalem congregation needed to appoint deacons to assist in the distribution of assistance to the widows, it was the "brethren" who were called upon to perform this task (Acts 6:3).

Similarly, when the congregation at Jerusalem met to discuss the question concerning circumcision, it was the “men and brethren” who were addressed and passed a resolution on the matter (Acts 15:4, 7, 22).

Also Scripture records that all positions of public teaching in the congregation were occupied by men. Foremost we have the examples of the apostles, exclusively men. Even in the Old Testament, the priests and teachers appointed to positions of authority were exclusively men. In the New Testament congregations, we have no examples of women pastors. The apostle Paul, defining the qualifications of a pastor, identifies this as an office to be occupied by a man (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Even the office of elder, which contains responsibilities of authority over the congregation, was to be occupied by a man (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Sometimes the question is asked, “May a woman be present at voters’ meetings of the congregation?” To this we reply that nowhere does Scripture forbid this, provided she does not break the principles previously stated. In fact, if there is a matter which is of particular interest to the women in the congregation, it may be of benefit to them to hear the actual discussion and decisions taken. However if women are present, they must be especially careful not in any way to influence discussion through words, gestures, facial expressions, or any other means. In connection with this, we state the following points for congregations to remember:

- a. The voting members should explain to the other members of the congregation the happenings in congregational meetings. The pastor or elders should take it in hand to inform the lady members who do not have a husband who is a voting member, so that they are aware of decisions of the congregation.
- b. If a woman has a matter she wishes to present to the meeting, this may be done either through a male member (her husband, the Pastor or an elder), or in writing. According to the Law of love, these views should be given consideration by the congregation.
- c. It is of value if an agenda is drawn up for the meeting, so that the matters coming up for discussion can be seen by the women, and they can discuss the matters and express their opinions to their husbands.
- d. The woman has a right to express her valid objection to the calling of a Pastor, a discipline case or a doctrinal position taken by the congregation. But this matter must be expressed outside the congregational meeting.

### III.

#### **ARGUMENTS CONTRARY TO THE BIBLE AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES**

Satan hates the Word of God because he knows that it is the means the Holy Ghost uses to bring about our salvation. If he can corrupt one doctrine within a church, even a non-fundamental teaching of the Bible, he is delighted because he knows that this false teaching will soon corrupt other teachings of the Bible within that church. Ultimately he is aiming to overcome and destroy the central teaching of the Bible, justification by faith in Christ alone.

So also the devil has attacked this teaching of the Bible with his cunning tricks, introducing the foolish thoughts and opinions of men. Amongst these are the following false claims:-

- a. *The Christian woman has liberty through the Gospel, therefore should be no longer bound by the commands of the Law of God. She is free to do as she pleases. She is therefore free to exercise authority over the man.*

Answer: It is true that the Christian has been redeemed through Christ's suffering and death and therefore has been made free from sin, death and the power of the devil (John 8:31-32; Rom. 8:21; Gal. 5:1). No longer does the curse of the Law rest upon him. But this does not

mean that he is free to lead a life of sin as he pleases. Rather with faith implanted in his heart, the Christian will gladly and willingly delight in serving his Master and obeying the Master's will (Rom. 6:18-22; Gal. 5:13).

*b. Christ declares in Gal. 3:28, "There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Surely this tells us that there should be no difference between the role of man and woman in the church.*

Answer: As the context of Gal 3:28 shows, the Apostle is speaking not about the responsibilities God has given to man and woman at Creation, but about matters of faith and salvation. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (v.26). Concerning our salvation, the way of getting to heaven, there is no difference between man and woman. Just as "Jew or Greek," "bond or free," so also "male and female" are saved alone by faith in Christ's work of redemption. But the position of women in the church is not directly connected with our salvation. It is one of the duties God has laid upon His children connected with the created sphere in this world. Men and women, both redeemed by Christ, will gladly obey the commands their Lord and Saviour has placed upon them.

*c. Women not exercising their authority over the man was just a custom of the times in the city of Corinth. Since the times today have changed, and the position women take in society is different, we no longer need observe these commands.*

Answer: This argument sounds very familiar. It is the one used by many Lutherans to deny the Lord's command concerning the wearing of the head-covering in the public worship service. What right does man have to challenge the clear command of God? The Lord, clearly anticipating this argument, states in 1 Cor. 14:34, "As also saith the Law," the Moral Law of God. Again it is stated in 1 Cor. 14:37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Also in 1 Tim. 2:13-14, the two reasons stated for the woman being "in silence with all subjection" are a part of God's Word first recorded in Genesis.

Indeed conditions in our world have changed. Mankind has become more rebellious and less prepared to accept the clear commands of Scripture. But Scripture itself does not change, nor do we have the right to disobey God because His Word no longer suits us.

*d. Paul was a woman hater and therefore decided to make the position of women as difficult as possible.*

Answer: This argument is such a blatant rejection of God's Word that it requires little response. What Paul wrote was not his own word but the Word of the eternal God, given under inspiration (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16). The Apostle Paul himself stated, (1 Cor. 2:13), "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." To accuse Paul with such false motives is to accuse the Lord who gave His Word through Paul of such evil.

*e. The passages in 1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2 which deal with women in the church are not a part of God's inspired Word and therefore need not be followed.*

Answer: God Himself promised, Matt. 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." And again in John 17:20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." Here the Lord promised that His Word would remain unto the last day. Therefore let us trust His promises and be sure that also all His Word will remain with us until the last day.

*f. Does not the Bible speak of prophetesses? How can you then maintain that women should not teach in the church?*

Answer: The Bible indeed speaks of prophetesses, examples being Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36) and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). Likewise we read in Joel 2:28, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and *your daughters shall prophesy*, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Here we see that the Lord also chose women to be His mouthpieces to teach and proclaim His Word on His behalf.

But note that in these passages we are not told that these women publicly taught the assemblies of Christians, nor that they were public teachers of male adults. Evidently what teaching or even prophesying of future events they did was done in private, in a way not in conflict with God's will.

The dreadful consequences of these attacks on God's Word are clearly visible. Failure to hold fast to God's Word has led many churches astray from Scripture, becoming more and more corrupted with false doctrine. Pressure of the ridicule of the world, the desire to please others and the wish to do what other churches are doing, has caused the vast majority no longer to follow the pathway of pure doctrine. Once we give way in one point of God's Word, we are soon enticed to part from other points of Scripture. "Buy the truth, and sell it not," the Lord tells us in Prov. 23:23. Many churches have put the desire for church union as more important than adhering strictly to the doctrines of Scripture. Outward unions have been achieved, but at the expense of unity in Scripture doctrine. Since they, like the congregation in Thyatira, allow the Jezebel of false teaching to take control (Rev. 2:18-29), they also must suffer from the curses which the Lord pronounces over this congregation.

#### IV.

#### THE GLORIOUS TASK GOD HAS GIVEN TO WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Often the complaint is heard from advocates of women in the ministry, "Women have many gifts and often are intellectually superior to the men. Why should they be restricted in what they can do to serve the Lord?"

The answer is simple: God's Word has revealed the Lord's will to us. The Christian woman, motivated by her love to the Saviour, will gladly desire to obey God and to submit to the authority of the man where God has commanded it. But she is not to think that the Lord has left her without a task in this world. Rather the Lord has given her a noble and honourable job in which she can show her thankfulness to the Lord for all He has done for her.

After explaining the duties of women in regard to subjection to the man, the Apostle Paul continues by stating (1 Tim. 2:15), "Notwithstanding she (the woman) shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." This does not mean that the woman gains her salvation through the bearing of children, since she is saved without works, alone by faith in Christ. But the chief focus of her womanhood, the chief job that God has given to her is the noble task of bringing children into the world and raising those children in accordance with God's Word. The world today frowns upon a woman who turns her back on a career, puts aside other earthly ambitions, and dedicates her life to the raising of her family and caring for her husband. Though there is also suffering involved in motherhood (Gen. 3:16; 35:16; Isaiah 13:8; 42:14; John 16:21; 1 Thess. 5:3), this is her true glory, the noble life's calling which the Lord has given to her.

The Bible places before us many wonderful examples of women who faithfully served their Saviour:-

- The shunemite woman is praised for providing a room and meal for the prophet Elijah whenever he passed through (2 Kings 4:10);

- The virtuous woman is praised for her wisdom and honour, being a crown to her husband, fearing the Lord and caring for the poor and needy (Prov. 11:16; 12:4; 14:1; 31:10, 20, 30);
- Women gave help and comfort to Christ in His daily need (Matt. 27:55-56; Luke 8:2-3);
- Mary anointed Jesus' feet to His burial (Mark 14:3-9);
- Lydia cared for Paul and Silas while they were staying in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15);
- Dorcas was praised for her good works and almsgiving (Acts 9:36-39);
- Mary and Martha loved their Saviour coming to visit at their home (Luke 10:38-42);
- The widow woman served the Lord even though she had such a small amount in the eyes of the world to give to Him (Luke 21:1-4);
- In Rom 16:1-2, 6, 12 and Phil. 4:3 the Apostle Paul names women who laboured with him in spreading the Word of God;
- 1 Tim. 5:10 a widow was praised if she was, "well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."

Women receive special distinction for their role in the New Testament Christian Church. They are among the last at the cross of Jesus (Mark 15:47). They were the first to the tomb of Jesus on Easter Sunday morning (John 20:1). They were the first to hear the proclamation of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28:5-8). They were amongst the first preachers to the Jews of the glad tidings of the Saviour's birth (Luke 2:37-38). They attended the first meeting for prayer of the Lord's disciples after His resurrection (Acts 1:14). They were the first to greet the Christian missionaries in Europe (Acts 16:13). A woman was the first European convert (Acts 16:14).

So also today, Christian women who have a love for the Saviour and a desire to serve Him in the work of God's Kingdom have many avenues in which they can use their talents. Women can be Sunday School teachers, organists and helpers in the upkeep and beautifying of the church building. They should take an active interest in worship and Bible Studies, realising that they too have a duty to judge the doctrine and practice of the Pastor and congregation. To this end they should be encouraged to ask and answer questions in the Bible Studies so that their knowledge of God's Word may be increased. They may call on the unchurched, visit and comfort the sick and aged, and in other ways witness concerning their Christian faith.

There is no greater privilege in the church than that of service to the Lord. The Lord said in Matt. 20:26, "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Christ said concerning Mary who out of love anointed His feet (Mark 14:9), "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Concerning deeds that are looked upon by the world as insignificant, the Lord says (Matt. 10:42), "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

May all Christians, both men and women, in whatever task God has placed them in this world, dedicate their lives to Him in faithful service. The reward of grace the Lord gives in eternity will be far beyond any joy this world has to offer.

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