



THE ROLE OF
WOMEN
IN THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The material in this book was originally prepared to be presented at a summer pastor's conference, but because of the change in attitude toward the roles of men and women and the confusion which seems to be so rampant today, I also delivered the material during two Sunday evening services in my own church. This fact will explain the form which the material in this book takes. The sermons were recorded and then typed from the tapes by two women in the church. They have been altered very little from the way that they were verbally presented.

As I prepared for these messages, I became aware that very little has been written on this subject. I searched the libraries of two theological seminaries and have read everything I could secure which purported to deal with the Biblical view of women in the church. Some of the material was written by those who didn't believe in the full authority of the Scripture, and I found myself in constant disagreement with their assumptions and conclusions. Other material was written by those who had a professed respect for the Scripture, and some of this was very helpful. I have quoted extensively from some of these publications and would recommend them highly. One thing, however, that I felt was lacking in the material I researched was a positive statement of what women may do in the church. In some small way, the second part of this book is an attempt to sound out a challenge to women concerning the many vital, strategic, and demanding ministries that they may perform for Christ.

After I preached these messages, the people of the church were very appreciative because they want to govern their lives in every

area by the Word of God. This appreciation was especially manifested by the women of our church. In fact, I don't know of any recent messages that the women have appeared to appreciate more, because these messages helped them to be more sure of God's place for them in the church and the world. These, then, are some of the reasons why our church board felt that this material should be published. We pray that God will in some way be pleased to use this publication to give Biblical anchorage and direction to His people in the midst of the cataclysmic changes that are taking place in man's understanding of the roles of men and women. What is found in this book is not a hobby horse with me, but I am convinced that it is part of that "whole counsel of God" which every pastor is commissioned to preach and every Christian is bound to believe and practice.

Wayne Mack
June, 1972

WHAT WOMEN MAY NOT DO IN THE CHURCH

Articles about the women's liberation movement have been standard fare for many newspapers and magazines in recent days. In most of these articles, the cry is that the women have been exploited and enslaved, and now it is time for them to be emancipated. The drive is for a unisex society where all distinctions between sexes are obliterated. If the women want to go out into the world and make the living then the men ought to stay at home. Too long have we forced women to waste their talents and frustrate themselves by compelling them to be housewives. All opportunities, responsibilities, and decision-making must be shared equally. No one should be the dominant individual forcing his will on another human being. Every man, woman, boy and girl should be allowed to do that which is right in his own eyes.

Not too long ago, when a well-known physician suggested that there were some things that women couldn't do as well as men because they were constitutionally different, (he wasn't suggesting inferiority, but differences in nature or physical or emotional makeup) he was severely criticized and charged with being antiquated, bigoted and terribly biased in his views. He was, to put it in the language that is presently so popular, a male chauvinist or male pig. Unquestionably, the mood that prevails in some segments of society today is the feeling that the role played by most women of the past was wrong.

But this is a mood that is not only prevalent in some segments of society. It is also presently very popular in many churches that call themselves churches of Jesus Christ. In 1891, Robert Dabney, a great southern theologian, wrote:

A few years ago the public preaching of women was universally condemned among all conservative denominations of Christians, and indeed, within their bounds was totally unknown. Now the innovation is brought face to face even with southern churches, and female preachers are knocking at our doors. These remarks show that a discussion of women's proper place in Christian society is again timely.

If Robert Dabney thought that it was timely to speak on the women's place in the church eighty years ago because female preachers were knocking at the door, how much more timely is such a discussion today, because now they have passed through the door.

Women in Church Leadership

Sometime ago, *Christianity Today* carried a news article describing what had happened at the 92nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

After long and heated debate ordination of women to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada was approved by the denomination's 92nd Annual General Assembly. The vote was 133-72. Some of the observers felt that the many vacant pulpits in the home mission field tipped the scales in favor of the action. The Assembly also voted to ordain women as elders. Many ministers saw this as the most important issue to face the church since 1925 when the church split.

One of the women candidates for ordination reported that when she got her divinity degree from Knox College, "They didn't even change the he in the 'damn' thing to she." Thus in Canada the door has been opened wide for women to serve in official leadership capacities on an equal basis with men.

This has not only happened in Canada. It has also happened in the United States of America. In the past few months, I have seen two articles in a local newspaper announcing the names of people who have been elected to the offices of elder, deacon, and trustee. In each case, women had been elected to the church boards to serve in official leadership capacities. Each of these churches was Presbyterian, but this is not only happening among Presbyterian churches. This is also happening in churches of many different denominations. The door had been opened, and we now have women serving as elders, trustees, deacons, and pastors in many liberal and evangelical churches. And in many other churches where this has not yet happened, women are functioning in managerial and directive capacities on important policy-making committees or else they are teaching mixed classes of men and women. It is therefore evident that the mood in many churches today seems to be toward an equalization of all opportunities, responsibilities and decision-making regardless of sex.

Biblical Authority as the Standard

What say the Scriptures about the role of women in the church? Our concern as Christians must never be, "what says the sociologist, or what says the culture in which we are living, or what is the mood of society around us, or what seems reasonable, or

what seems expedient, or what seems profitable?" No, our concern must be, what saith the Scriptures?

It is the Scriptures that God has given to be "a lamp to our feet and a light to our path." "To the law and to the testimony" must be our rule of thumb in this matter as well as every other area of life.

Dogmatic, experiential, sociological or cultural arguments must not be our basis in any area of faith or practice in the Christian Church. The London and Westminster Confession of Faith declares that

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or tradition of men.

This is as true in reference to the woman's role in the church as it is to any other matter in the Christian Church. This is as true in reference to this question as it is in reference to the great foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Therefore, the question which we want to consider in this booklet is what do the Scriptures say about the place of women in the church?

I want to answer this question in a two-fold way. I want to first of all answer it negatively and state what the Scriptures say a woman may not do in the church. I hesitate to begin on a negative note because some people hate negatives. When you tell people they can't do this or shouldn't do that, that is the very thing they want to do or the very thing they want to have. They don't like negatives. But we must face the fact that the Bible contains negatives. Eight out of the Ten Commandments which we call the "Ten Commandments" come to us in a negative fashion. God says eight out of ten times,

"Thou shalt not." The only two that come to us in a positive fashion are the ones which tell us to "remember the Sabbath" and "to honor our fathers and our mothers." So even though I know the danger of beginning in a negative fashion. I am going to do it because I happen to think this is the best way to approach the subject of the Bible's teaching on the woman's place in the church.

I am not, however, going to stop with the negative teaching of the Bible. I feel that too many people who have written or spoken on this subject have begun and ended on a negative note. This is unfortunate because the Bible has much to say about what the women may do in the church. In the second part of this booklet, I want to consider this positive aspect of Bible truth.

The Headship Principle in Ephesians 5

Now, what does the Bible say women may not do in the church? To answer that question, I want to direct your attention to a few passages that speak to this issue. Certainly, one of the basic passages to be looked at in any consideration of the woman's place is Eph. 5:22-33. In the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul tells us about the great doctrines of the faith and how God has blessed us. He tells us about election, about predestination, about adoption, about how God has abounded to us in all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

Then in the fourth chapter, he turns from a primary consideration of doctrine to a consideration of our conduct in response to that doctrine. In chapter 4:1, he tells us to walk worthy of our high calling in Christ Jesus because of the great blessings that God has bestowed upon us. He goes on in much of chapters 4 and 5, giving

general principles for Christian living. But when we come to chapter 5:22, Paul stops being general and starts becoming very specific.

Where does he start when he gets down to the "nitty-gritty"? Where does he start when he gets down to specifics? He starts with the relationship of the husband and wife because this is the most basic of all human relations. It is more basic than the relationship between parent and child. God didn't call us to leave our fathers and mothers and cleave to our children. Our children will and ought to leave us but God commanded husbands and wives to cleave to one another. This, then, is the most fundamental of all relationships, and it is the one that we ought to work at hardest of all.

Submission in Marriage and the Church

Well, what does Paul say about the relationship of husbands and wives? In verse 22, he says:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

As you read on through the context, Paul makes it very clear that the husband is to be the head of the home; the husband is to rule in the home; the husband is to be responsible for authority, for guidance, for direction and for provision. It is the husband who is to provide for his wife. He is the one who is to nourish and cherish the wife. Nowhere does this passage say that it is the wife's responsibility to support her husband.

This passage declares that the husband is to be the head of the family and the wife is to be in submission. Furthermore, the passage declares that her submission is to be a submission that is similar to the submission that she yields to the Lord. Verse 22 says, "Wives submit unto your own husbands *as unto the Lord.*" This is why I challenge young ladies that if they can't submit themselves wholly and unreservedly to a certain young man, they should not marry him. If they can't trust themselves into his hands in somewhat the same fashion that they trust themselves to Jesus Christ, they should not go to the marriage altar. The Scriptures say, "Submit yourself unto your own husband as unto the Lord." When a Christian submits himself to Jesus Christ, he submits himself to Jesus Christ unreservedly in every area of life. He doesn't come and say, "You may have these areas of my life but I will hang on to these." No, the Christian submits himself in every area, and the wife's submission to her husband is to be something like this submission. Unless her husband asks her to do something which is contrary to the revealed will of God, she ought to submit.

The Scriptures say in verse 23, "The husband is the head of the wife even as (that is, in the same fashion, in the same manner as) Christ is the head of the Church and he is the savior of the body." The Church is not its own savior, but Christ is its savior. And the husband, in a physical and also in a somewhat spiritual way, is the savior of the wife as he labors for her salvation and for her sanctification. Her submission to him is to be like the submission of the church to Jesus Christ. Paul says, "Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in *everything.*"

But what does that have to do with the subject of the place of women in the Church? This passage is talking about the place of women in the home. Yes, that's true, but notice that the passage says that the wife is to be subject unto her own husband "*in everything*." This includes what happens in the home, but also what happens outside of the home. The Church is made up of families and if it is improper for the wife to exercise dominion over her husband in the privacy of the home, it is improper for her to exercise dominion over her husband outside of the home in the Church. If she cannot be the head of one family, she cannot be the head of the Church which is made up of a number of families.

The same argument which the Apostle Paul uses in 1 Timothy chapter 3 concerning men becoming elders may be applied to women. He says in 1 Timothy chapter 3 that if a man can't control, rule, and care for his own family, he can't be an elder. If he can't handle the minor responsibilities of one family, then he should not be given bigger responsibilities over a group of families. Similarly, if God won't allow the women to manage the minor responsibilities of being the head of one family, it is rather ridiculous to assert that God would give her the larger responsibilities of managing many families in the Church. In the Church and in the home, the woman is to be in submission to her husband.

The Meaning of Male Headship

But someone argues. "Ephesians chapter 5 is referring to married women. What about unmarried women?" Well, there are some who say that the Bible has nothing to say about unmarried women. They believe that it is wrong for married women to have positions of leadership in the Church, but assert that the Bible says nothing

about unmarried women. They say that this submission, of which Ephesians 5 speaks, is not the submission of one sex to another sex. Rather, it is the submission of the wife to her husband. When a woman becomes a wife, she must become submissive. But if she is not married, she is equal with the man in every respect. As long as she remains unmarried, she can have just as much say, just as much position in the Church as any man. The Bible commands wives to be in subjection to their husbands, but it does not command women to be in subjection to men. Now, if that is true, women who are married get the short end of the stick, for women who aren't married have opportunities that the rest of the women do not have.

This view may appear to be very plausible and reasonable and there are many evangelicals who hold this view. But while it seems plausible and reasonable, it is unscriptural.

Creation Order and Male Leadership

Turn with me to 1 Cor. 11:3. Paul says, "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." The verse states:

1. The head of *every* man is Christ. That is true of every saved and unsaved man. Paul is not talking only about Christians. Christ is the Lord of every man. He is the head of every man, and whether or not every man acknowledges it doesn't change this fact. Regardless of how a man responds to Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is still in the plan and program of God the head of every man.
2. But this verse says more than that. It also says that the man is the head of the woman. And Paul isn't talking only about

husbands in this phrase, any more than he was talking about husbands only when he said that Christ is the head of every man. The same word is used for the male species in the first and second phrases. Christ is the head of every man, whether he is a Christian or not, whether he is a husband or not. Likewise, in the plan of God, man is to be head of the woman, whether that man is a husband or not, and whether the woman is a wife or not. He is talking about the relationship of the sexes, and he says very clearly that the head of the woman is the man. He does not merely say that the head of the wife is the husband.

Later in the same passage, Paul says, "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, for as much as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man." This passage clearly teaches that the woman is the glory of God only in a secondary sense. Matthew Henry comments on this passage that the man is the representative of that glorious dominion and headship which God has over the world. It is the man who is set at the head of this lower creation, and therein he bears the resemblance of God. The woman, on the other hand, is the glory of man: she is his representative. Not but she has dominion over the inferior creatures, as she is a partaker of human nature, and so far is God's representative too, but it is at second hand. She is the image of God, inasmuch as she is the image of man...

Richard Lenski says that this passage means that

man is... God's glory, a mirror that reflects some of God's glorious attributes. In the case of the woman this is quite otherwise: "the woman is man's glory." Eve was not "God's

image and glory" in the same sense as Adam was. Strictly speaking, according to her creation, which also redemption has not altered, she must be called "man's glory." Her entire creation places her in direct and immediate relation to man. She was made for man; she was to be his "helpmeet." The reverse cannot be said. Adam expressed the truth exactly: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

One commentator states that what Paul means in this passage is that the man, as God's representative, is to rule and to glorify God in a very direct fashion, but the woman, being the glory of the man, is to glorify God by fulfilling the desires of the man. She is to glorify God as she puts herself under the man and serves and fulfills the needs of the man. She is to glorify God in fulfilling womanly responsibilities.

Going on to verses 8, 9 and 10, Paul gives reasons for this arrangement. He says, "For the man is not of the woman." He is taking us back to creation. and telling us that it was not the man that was formed out of the woman, but the woman was out of the man. God made the woman out of Adam's side. Furthermore, Paul says, "Neither was the man created for the woman." God didn't look down and see the woman and say, "It is not good for Eve to be alone; I will make her a help meet." No, he looked down and saw Adam and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him."

One commentator has pointed out that if God had so chosen, he could have created Adam and Eve simultaneously. But he didn't. He created the man first and then out of the man he made the woman.

Why? Because we are to learn something about the purpose of woman's creation. Her desire was to be unto the man. Married women certainly have no right to usurp authority over their husbands. This is contrary to God's creative purpose. But certainly this passage makes it very clear that it is not just wives in particular, but all women whom God created to be in submission to men.

Women and Silence in the Church

Another passage which enunciates this same principle is 1 Cor. 14:33-35. In the context, Paul is dealing with the public worship of the church. In verse 23 he says, "Therefore if the whole church be come together." He is talking about the public worship services of the church and he is laying down principles which are to guide us in public worship. He tells us at the end of verse 26 that everything we do in our public worship services should be done unto edifying. Continuing on in verses 29 through 33, he gives us still another principle to govern worship services. He tells us that everything should be done orderly and decently, "for God is not the author of confusion but of peace." Orderliness ought to characterize our worship services. Arguing and debating; two or three people talking at once; confusion and disorder ought to be banned from our public worship services.

Finally, at the end of verse 33 and going on through verse 35, he gives us one other principle for public worship. In the King James version, the end of verse 33 is connected to the first part of verse 34, but almost all commentators and expositors agree that the end of verse 33 should go with verse 34. The word arrangement that we have in our Bibles was not in the original manuscripts. Many books of the Bible were written as letters in paragraph form. Hundreds of

years after these letters had been written, men divided the Bible into chapters and verses so that we could find things in our Bibles. The majority of the chapter and verse divisions are excellently done, but many translators and commentators believe that the end of 1 Corinthians 14:33 more properly belongs with verse 34. What Paul is saying is

As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silent in the churches: for it is not permitted for them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Paul is saying that it is the custom in all the churches for the women to be silent. He is saying that he doesn't know of any church where this is not true. Now that seems to be plain. How much plainer could he make it? The women are to keep silent; they are not permitted to speak; they are commanded to be under obedience. He doesn't say, "I think it would be nice if they wouldn't speak." He doesn't say, "It is not my desire that they should speak." He says, "They are not permitted to speak. I won't allow it. I won't put up with, I won't permit the women to speak in the churches. If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home for it is a dishonor, it is a disgrace, it is a shameful thing for women to speak in the church."

Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14

As might be expected, there has been a great deal of controversy over this statement of Paul. All sorts of arguments have been used to escape the force of Paul's statement. One argument that has

been used is this. Paul isn't saying that women shouldn't speak in the church. He is saying that women shouldn't argue or babble in the church. Some people say, "Here is the situation. While men were preaching, the women were talking, and bringing confusion. They were arguing, raising their hands, and interrupting the speakers. And so Paul was saying, "Don't argue, don't debate, don't babble in the church." And, of course, that would be true not only of women, but of men also.

The fallacy of this interpretation is manifested by noting that the same word that is translated "speak" in verses 34 and 35 is used for normal conversation elsewhere in the chapter. Verse 28 says, "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; let him speak to himself and to God." Was Paul commanding men to argue with themselves and God? No, he was referring to normal conversation and to prayer. Therefore, Paul isn't talking about babbling, arguing, or being in a debating spirit in verses 34 and 35. He is talking about preaching or speaking when he commands the women not to speak.

Another argument that is sometimes used is that Paul wasn't talking about all women. Paul was talking about the unsaved women who came and did not understand what was going on in the church. These women would stick up their hands and ask questions, and Paul was saying we don't allow unsaved people to talk in the church. There are others who say that he was just talking about married women. What he is saying is that married women who speak up in the church are not showing subjection or submission to their own husbands. Married women ought to keep quiet until they go home. At home, they may talk the matter over with their husbands and get the answers to their questions. The

only women whom Paul would allow to speak in the church were the unmarried women. They could speak and preach just as freely as the men.

Now the trouble with this explanation is that Paul says, women, not simply wives, are to be silent. And the word that is translated "women" means "women." In some contexts it does mean "wife," but in many passages, it just means a female. Matthew 27:55 says that the women came and watched Jesus on the cross. This certainly doesn't mean that all these women were wives. Matthew 9:20 speaks of a woman that had an issue of blood. We don't know if she was married or not and this is beside the point. What Matthew was saying is that she was a woman, she was a female, and she came to Jesus having a terrible sickness. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 14:34 is talking about all women—not just unsaved women, not just married women—but all females.

Ah, but some say, what about the 35th verse which says, "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home..." There it is, they have to be married women. No they don't, because this word translated "husband" is the Greek word "aner." This Greek word "aner" or "andros" (another form of the same word), simply means "man." In some cases it refers to men who are husbands. In other cases it refers to the male species whether they are husbands or not. In Mark 6:20 this word is used to describe John, the Baptist. Does anybody know whether or not John, the Baptist, was married? The Bible gives no indication that he was, and yet John is described by the same word that is used in 1 Corinthians 14:35. The same word is used in 1 Corinthians 13:11 where Paul says, "When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." What does he

mean? Does he mean, when I became a husband, I put away childish things? Well, I hope husbands do put away childish things, but I don't think that is what Paul is referring to. He is comparing his adult state with his childhood state. He says, "When I was a child, I acted like a child: when I became a man, when I became an adult, I put away childish things."

According to Richard Lenski, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, what Paul is saying here is that if women have some problems and some questions they ought to ask their *own men*. Now the men that they are to ask may be their Christian husbands, or they may be their Christian brothers, or they may be their Christian uncles, or fathers, or they may even be their Christian sons. Most women have men at home, and Paul is telling them to go home and talk to their own Christian men. Of course, if there are some women who do not have any male relatives who know the Lord and are living in close proximity, then the men that they should ask would be the elders of the church. The Scriptures assert that the elders are to function as fathers in the church. So the women are allowed to come for counsel and direction to the elders of the church as long as the counseling is conducted in a discreet manner. Thus, the argument that Paul is just talking about married women is invalid.

Another argument that is sometimes used to evade Paul's teaching is that these are not the words of the Apostle Paul. They say, "Paul did not really write these words. Remember what Paul was doing in the book of 1 Corinthians. He was answering many questions that had been raised by the Corinthian people. They sent some questions to him by some brethren who were of the household of Chloe, (1 Cor. 1:11) and much of the book of 1 Corinthians is taken up with the answers that Paul wrote to the questions that they

asked. Now, in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35, what we really have is not Paul's answer to the Corinthians' question; rather, we have a statement of the Corinthians' question.

This is honestly how one woman preacher explained these verses. I read it in her book, and I also read it in an article by an evangelical preacher in a popular Christian magazine. I don't know if this pastor picked this explanation up from the woman preacher or not. But if he did, he ought to throw it back to her, because there is absolutely nothing in the context to support this explanation. In many other situations in the book of 1 Corinthians where Paul answers questions, he introduces the problem that they are having in a very clear fashion, and then gives his answer (1 Corinthians 7:1). There is no indication that 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 is a restatement of a question and I submit that the only way you could get that out of this passage would be if you had a tremendous bias and didn't want to accept what it was teaching.

A fourth argument that is used to get around these verses is that Paul was an anti-feminist. He was an old "fuddy duddy." He was an old bachelor who didn't like women. At least two things are wrong with this explanation. First, it ignores the doctrine of inspiration. These are not the words of the Apostle Paul. These are the words of God, for "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine." The second thing that is wrong with this explanation is that it ignores the other writings of Paul which make it clear that Paul had a tremendous appreciation for women. In Romans 16, he sends greetings to many people in Rome and among them are the names of many women for whom he expresses his deep appreciation. He talks about "Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." He tells the Roman Christians

to receive "her in the Lord as becometh saints, and... assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also." Then he says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom I not only give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Later in the same passage, he talks about the mother of Rufus and he asserts that she is also my mother. In these words, Paul demonstrates his deep appreciation for women.

Paul also showed his respect for women when he wrote to the Philippians. He mentions Euodias and Syntyche, who were his fellow helpers in the Lord. Likewise, when he wrote the book of II Timothy, he talks about Lois and Eunice for whom he had great appreciation and respect. He commends them for the way that they raised the young man, Timothy.

Donald Macleod, in an article for the *Banner of Truth* magazine, has this to say about Paul's attitude toward women:

From all that we know of the Apostle Paul, he truly was not an anti-feminist. He had no difficulty in adjusting to the society of women. He speaks of them with respect, sometimes in terms of discreet affection or frank commendation. Significantly Luke, the evangelist of Pauline tradition, gives the prominent place both in his gospel and the book of Acts to the part played by women in the furtherance of the gospel. He carefully records their devotion and fidelity. And this, to some extent at least, is simply a reflection of the fact that in the Judaism which Paul imbibed during his formative years, women were not

relegated to the dishonorable and oppressed position which they occupied in the society of Rome and Greece.

Furthermore, the women whose acquaintance we make in the writings of Paul and Luke were not down trodden and illiterate. Lydia, Priscilla, Phebe, Lois, and Eunice were ladies of intelligence, information, culture, resourcefulness as well equipped to rule as any of their sex who aspire to these offices today."

The argument that is often used today is that the women of Bible times didn't have the education or the advantages that modern women have, and consequently weren't equipped to do the job of teaching. But things are different now. Women have been educated and are now qualified to teach.

This kind of reasoning completely ignores the facts of the Scriptures because there are many intellectual, well-qualified, educated, capable women who grace the pages of the New Testament. It would be entirely wrong to equate them with the idle gossips found in the Victorian novels. Robert Dabney has said

We never find the apostle drawing a depreciated picture of woman; every allusion of his to the believing woman is full of reverent respect and honor. Among the Christian women who come into Paul's history there is not one who is portrayed after this imagined pattern of childish ignorance and weakness... all appear in the narrative as bright examples of Christian intelligence, activity, dignity, and nobleness. It was not left for the pretentious Christianity of the nineteenth century to begin the emancipation of woman. As soon as the primitive doctrine conquered a household, it

did its blessed work in lifting up the feebler and oppressed sex; and it is evident that Paul's habitual conception of female Christian character in the churches in which he ministered was at least as favorable as his estimate of male members.

Thus the argument that Paul is anti-feminist is invalid because it is contrary to the facts.

Spiritual Equality

Another argument which is used to evade the teachings of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 is the text in Galatians 3:28. In Galatians 3:28, the Bible says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." There are some who have a low view of Scripture, that is, they don't have much respect for the Scripture and are willing to chop it up and say that part of the Bible is the word of God and part of it is not the word of God, who say that Paul was in error in 1 Corinthians 14. In Galatians 3:28 he really grabbed hold of the truth. Here he really knew what he was talking about, but when he wrote 1 Corinthians 14, he slipped back and didn't realize that he was contradicting himself.

There are others who have a higher view of Scripture who explain away 1 Corinthians 14 in some of the ways that I have already mentioned because they feel that Galatians 3:28 requires it. They feel that there is a contradiction between these two passages unless we explain away 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 by saying that Paul didn't really mean what he seems to mean.

There is, however, no contradiction between Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 because he is talking about two different things. In Galatians 3:28 he is talking about spiritual privileges, and when it comes to spiritual privileges, there is no male or female, Jew or Greek, bond or free. We are all one, we have all been elected by God, the Father. We have all been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. We have all been born again by the same Holy Spirit. We have all been taught at the same fount, the word of God. We all have the same sanctification. We all have the same destination. We all have the same privilege of coming to the Father in prayer. God never says, "You can't come, I won't accept you because you are a woman." So, when it comes to spiritual privileges, the women have just as many privileges before God as the men do.

Donald Macleod says:

... the teaching of this passage is both precious and important. It affirms the priesthood of all believers. Women, no less than men, have access to God through Jesus Christ. They share to the full in the privileges of justification, sanctification, adoption. They may have the same assurance of God's love, the same peace of conscience, the same joy in the Holy Spirit. Equally certainly they may serve. That is not open to question. Indeed, they must serve. They have their own ministry, their own diaconate, the natural, spontaneous and necessary result of salvation. They are caught up, equally with men, in the work of redemption. In the sequence of election, salvation, and service. In response to the divine mercy, they must present themselves as living and holy sacrifices to God.

In Galatians 3:28 Paul is talking about spiritual privileges. In 1 Corinthians 14 he is talking about something completely different. He is not talking about spiritual privileges, he is talking about duty, he is talking about function. Paul is not asserting in Galatians 3 that there are absolutely no differences between men and women after they become Christians. He is not saying that any more than he is saying that there is no difference between a Jew and a Greek after they become Christians. After Paul became a Christian, he didn't say I am not a Jew anymore, now I am a Greek. Paul delighted in his Jewish heritage and he allowed the Greeks the privilege of delighting in their Greek heritage. He didn't say to Onesimus after he had become a Christian, "Onesimus, don't you go back to Philemon and be a slave any more, because now you are a Christian and there are absolutely no differences between slaves and masters." No, he sent him back to Philemon, and told him to serve his master.

Paul didn't mean that as far as function and duty was concerned, there were no differences among Christians. In Galatians, he was talking about spiritual privileges; here there are no differences. In 1 Corinthians, he was talking about spiritual responsibilities and here there are many differences. If Paul meant that there was absolutely no difference between male and female, then he was not only contradicting what he said in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Corinthians 11 about leadership in the church, but he was also contradicting what he said in Ephesians 5 and many other passages about the husband being the head of the home. If there is absolutely no difference between the man and the woman, then you can't have the husband as the head of the home. Paul would be contradicting himself because he says that women are to be in subjection, that

women are not to have the duties, that women are not to have the same role, that women are not to have the same responsibilities as their husbands.

In relation to spiritual privileges, there is neither male nor female, but then too, there is neither son nor father, there is neither citizen nor ruler. However, in relationship to responsibilities, there is male and female, there is son and there is father, there are citizens and rulers. If it is true that to say that there is neither male nor female when people become Christians means that all distinctions between the sexes are obliterated, it would also of necessity be true that all distinctions between Christian fathers and Christian sons are annulled. This would mean that the son could properly perform the functions of the father. This would also mean that the Christian citizen could just as well perform the functions of the ruler. If all differences in function and responsibility are completely wiped out when a person becomes a Christian, all possibility of order among human beings is destroyed and every man is free to do what is right in his own eyes. This, I am sure, is not the teaching of Paul in Galatians 3:28.

Cultural Arguments Examined

One other argument, and this is the big gun that is often used, is that in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul was accommodating himself to the views of his time. He was not laying down truth for all times. He knew the cultural situation in which the Corinthians lived. He knew the position of women in the Greek and Roman civilizations. He knew that if all the implications of Christianity were worked out to the full, Greek and Roman men would be turned off and never give the Gospel a hearing. So Paul said, "Look, you women, I know that

you have identical rights with the men, but we want to reach these people for Christ, so you give in, you be deprived of your rights to take the leadership in the church. Someday, way off in the future, in the 20th century, when people no longer have these antiquated ideas, then 1 Corinthians 14 will no longer be valid and women can serve in just the same capacities as men."

Christians who make statements like these feel that now that we have come of age we should no longer have these oppressive ideas. Now we ought to throw off the shackles and ignore what Paul had to say, for Paul was simply accommodating himself to the views of the society in which he lived. But in at least three passages, 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2:9-14, Paul is very careful to say that his views were not simply based upon the customs of his day. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Paul says. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak." Why not? because they might offend the Romans and Greeks around them? because it was contrary to the customs of society? No. Paul says that they are not permitted to speak because "they are commanded to be under obedience (subject, submissive), as also saith the law." The law says. "Don't speak." What law? Not the Roman law, not the Greek law, but the law of God. Paul wasn't arguing on the basis of customs, he wasn't arguing on the basis of geography or place or time in history, but on the basis that the law of God commanded it.

The phrase, "the law of God" sometimes refers to the Ten Commandments. It sometimes refers to the first five books of the Bible. And sometimes it refers to the whole Old Testament. The whole Old Testament gives us a picture of the woman in submission. Sarah called Abraham, "Lord..." "Thy desire shall be to

thy husband and he shall rule over thee," says the Old Testament to women.

Paul says it is not permitted for women to speak. They are to be under "subjection" or "obedience." This is a military term which was used to describe what took place in the army. In the army, there is a captain under whom the soldiers were to put themselves in array and order. That is the picture in 1 Corinthians 14:34, women are to be in order under men.

But why should women do this? Paul says, "Do it because that is what the law says, and do it because it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Why? Because the Greeks and Romans won't like it? No, because God won't like it, because it will displease God, because it is against the law of God.

This is the very same argument that Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2. The book of 1 Timothy was written to instruct the Church as to how they ought to conduct their affairs. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul says, "I want to tell you how to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar, and ground of the truth." Thus in this book, he is instructing them how to conduct their affairs in the assembly of the saints.

Women Teaching and Exercising Authority

The opening verses of 1 Timothy 2 tell us what men ought to do in the church. In verse 8, Paul says, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere..." The word which is here translated "will" isn't merely expressing Paul's desire. It is expressing his decree. It is a word that says I will, I decree, I demand, therefore that men pray everywhere. It is not just a suggestion. In the Greek it is much stronger than that.

There are three primary Greek words which are translated "will." One of them simply means, I would like you to do it, it is my desire; another means, I am about to do it; and the other is an authoritative decree meaning, I command you to do it, and that is the word we have here. Paul says, "I command, I will, I decree therefore that men pray everywhere," not just in trouble, not just in the home, but everywhere. In the presence of men, in the presence of women, men are to pray.

Then having talked to the men, he turns to the women and gives them instructions about the way that they are to conduct themselves in public, about the way that they are to behave themselves in the church. He says. "In like manner also, women (ought to) adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness, and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array." And why ought women to do this? Well, because they shouldn't come to church to draw attention to themselves. They should come to worship God, so they ought to be careful about the way they dress in order that when they walk in, people won't be thinking of them throughout the service instead of God. Their desire in coming to the worship service should be that God gets the glory, not that people should look at their hairdos and say. "My, that is beautiful;" not that people should look at their jewelry and say, "Isn't that tremendous?" not that people should look at their dresses and be shocked because they are too short or too low cut or too gaudy or too expensive.

Paul speaks here of modest apparel, and certainly Christian women ought to be careful about the way they dress to come to church. Since they are coming to worship and glorify God, they ought to make sure that their clothing is appropriate.

Well, how should women be dressed when they come to church? Paul says, "In like manner that women adorn themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair or gold, or pearls, or costly array." There is nothing wrong with the women braiding their hair, but in Paul's day, some women put great amounts of jewelry into their hair. Some spent hundreds of dollars for jewelry which they wound into their hair and for pearls and dresses which they put on their bodies. Many women were going to excess in these matters and calling attention to themselves. They were obviously too concerned about the impression that they would make on other people. This should not have been, and Paul is trying to warn Christian women about this wrong emphasis. He says that women ought to "adorn themselves... with good works" because these good works become women who profess godliness. The main concern of women who profess godliness ought to be good works, which consist in serving others, loving and obeying their husbands, relieving the afflicted, properly training children, guiding the house, being hospitable, obeying God's commands and sharing the Gospel, instead of this overemphasis upon making the body attractive and appealing.

Having spoken to this matter, Paul continues to address the women in these words: "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection (same word as is found in 1 Corinthians 14:34), but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Why? Because of culture? Because of custom? Because of what people might say or think? No. Paul carefully guards against any such suggestion. Whether people know it or not, the Holy Spirit did know that in the 20th century, people were going to come up with the idea that Paul was just talking about some local

circumstances. Therefore, the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to be very explicit in what he had to say in this passage. Paul asserts that the reason women should neither teach, nor usurp authority, that is, be the boss over or dominate men is because "Adam was first formed, then Eve." Paul takes it all the way back to creation. This is how it is to be, because this is the way God planned it. God planned that the husband should be the head of the home. God planned that men should lead, and women should follow.

In verse 14, Paul gives still another reason for this arrangement. He says, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." It was the woman that first ate of the fruit. Eve was leading, when she should have been following, and here Paul reminds us of the fatal consequences of the act. Here Paul reminds us that the basis for male leadership and women's submission is not the customs or culture or practices of men, but the very plan and program and purpose of God in creation. It wasn't culture, it wasn't custom, it wasn't what people might say or think that caused Paul to say what he did about women in the church. Rather, it was what Paul knew to be the purpose of God in creation. This is why he believed that women ought to be in subjection to men, both in the home and out of the home. Donald Macleod has said of Paul's arguments:

Whatever our opinion of Paul's arguments we must recognize that they are not the arguments of a man bowing to expediency. In his own intention his teaching was not a concession to local and temporary circumstances but an enunciation of principles valid for all time and in every place. To dismiss it as irrelevant to us is virtually to say that the Apostle exaggerated his own importance. He thought there

were basic differences between man and woman. He thought the narrative of the Creation and the Fall pointed to these. He thought that in forbidding women to speak in the Christian assemblies he had the mind of the Spirit and was laying down the commandments of the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 14:34, Paul says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." Paul was convinced that what he said was not merely his opinion, rather it was the commandment of the Lord. And so let us be assured that when we disobey these commandments concerning women, we are not disobeying or disagreeing with Paul. we are disobeying and disagreeing with God. The importance of these Scriptures cannot be evaded. The clear teaching is that women are to be in subjection to men not only in the home but also in the church. The clear teaching is that men, not women, are to rule not only in the home but also in the church.

If we say, "Yes, that is what Paul seems to be teaching, but I think he was wrong on this point and I will not submit to him," let us be aware of what we are doing. First of all, we are being terribly presumptuous. We are suggesting that we are really smarter than Paul was, and that we know better than Paul did. Secondly, we are undermining all apostolic authority. Beware of this. If we reject the teaching of the apostle Paul at this point, we are undermining all apostolic authority: we are opening the door for throwing out the whole Bible because if Paul was wrong here, we can disagree with him wherever we want to. If Paul was wrong about this matter, how do we know he was right about anything? The Bible

ceases to be an authority, and we become the authority that determines what is right and wrong in the Bible.

This is precisely the case with many. One man stated that "A right use of Scripture requires that we distinguish the permanent from the passing. As we study the history of the church we can see the harmful effects of trying to retain the non-essentials that can and ought to change with the evolution of human life. As long as we remain true to the *genius of Christianity* as outlined in the Bible, (whatever that means, I don't know. Who determines what is the *genius of Christianity*? What may be the *genius of Christianity* to me may not be the *genius of Christianity* to others) we need not fear that we are being disloyal to the Scriptures when we move beyond the non-essentials that are obsolete and irrelevant today." In other words, come to the Bible and you choose what is essential and what is non-essential. After all, you are just as smart and you are just as intelligent as the apostle Paul. After all, we have made some progress since the time of Paul, so let's go beyond him. When we adopt this attitude, we have undermined all apostolic authority and we have destroyed any basis for our faith. Thirdly, when we adopt this attitude, we must realize that we are not rebelling against Paul, we are rebelling against God, because it was God who ordained that men should rule.

Pragmatism vs Biblical Obedience

In our day, pragmatic arguments are often used to make it legal for women to ignore Paul's statements. It is suggested that in Paul's day there were enough men to go around. But times are different now. If women didn't do it today, it just wouldn't get done. And furthermore, the questions are asked, how dare you speak out

against these dear women who so generously give of their time and their ability to the church to go all the way out into deep, dark Africa and into the jungles of South America to lay their lives on the line for God? How dare you criticize when God blesses them and they have such tremendous success? How can you question what women are doing when hundreds of people are brought to Jesus Christ through their preaching and teaching? Oh yes, Paul could say what he did, because his situation was different. There were plenty of willing men then, but now men don't want to go out as missionaries, men don't want to work in the church. If women don't do these things the job won't get done. One man wrote, "All evangelicals are conscious that without the active support of women both in private and public, churches would be under a tremendous handicap even if they could continue to exist at all. Women have entered the pulpit and they are singularly blessed of God."

Another man in an article in *Eternity* magazine, tells of a young woman from his church who went out to the mission field. There she ministered to two and sometimes three churches. Now said this man, "If she had not gone, there would have been no gospel witness in that area." (Now to say dogmatically that if she had not gone there would have been no gospel testimony is a strong statement unless you are omniscient. but he makes it anyway.) Furthermore, he asks, "Was she right or was she wrong? As far as I am concerned, she was completely in the will of God. There were no men to send to those people, the field must be closed unless some woman went and took that place. In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female."

Another man said, "If women are denied the privilege of leadership, our churches would be bereaved of a large portion of both the

spiritual and intellectual life which is so essential to the success of the church."

How do we answer such strong assertions as these? Well, in the first place, we must remember that the Paul who wrote these epistles was a missionary. And he was writing to mission churches. Christianity had just been introduced. If there was ever a time when the pragmatic argument should have been applied, it was then. If there was ever a time when women were needed as elders, missionaries, and pastors, it was then. But Paul says, "No, it is not according to God's plan." Oh, but someone says, "Paul, we need more witnesses." And Paul replies, "I know, but God has said in his law that men are to take the leadership roles and I won't disobey the will of God."

Secondly, we need to remember that apparent success is never the criteria by which we judge whether something is right or wrong. That is one of the curses of our civilization. That is one of the curses of many evangelical movements. Recently, I observed an evangelistic service where people, at the conclusion of the service, flocked to the front of the building. I saw them giggling on their way to the front. I saw one fellow coming down the aisle taking snap shots with a camera. He was supposedly coming to Jesus. Well, to many, that was a successful evangelistic campaign. And, because it was apparently successful, anything that was done or said in it was all right. The same argument is used to justify women preachers and leaders in the church. But is "success" absolute proof that what we are doing is right? I think not. When Paul wrote Philippians 1, he rejoiced that Christ was being preached whether men were preaching him in pretense or sincerity. But when he rejoiced that Christ was being preached, he was not condoning preaching Christ

in pretense. It was not the fact that they were preaching in pretense that he was condoning. No, he was praising God that in spite of the fact that Christ was not being preached with a proper spirit, he was being preached, and God was using this preaching in spite of the way that it was being done. This doesn't prove that what they were doing was right. This just proves that sometimes, God is pleased to use men in spite of their disobedience and error. This just proves that God sometimes uses men in spite of the fact that at that point they are out of the will of God.

Robert Dabney incisively manifests the fallacy of using results to prove the legitimacy of our endeavors.

Two very simple truths, which no believer disputes, explode the whole force of this appeal to results. One is that a truly good person may go wrong in one particular, and our heavenly Father, who is exceedingly forbearing, may withhold his displeasure from the misguided efforts of his child, through Christ's intercession, because, though misguided, he is his child. The other is, that it is one of God's clearest and blessed prerogatives to bring good out of evil. Thus who can doubt but it is wrong for a man dead in trespasses and sins to intrude into the sacred ministry. Yet God has often employed such sinners to convert souls; not sanctioning their profane intrusion, but glorifying his own grace by overruling it."

Thus the apparent success of women in the ministry does not prove that what they are doing is right.

And furthermore, who are we to judge what is really successful? We are not omniscient. All the facts are not in yet. What we point to as

success may in the long run be the greatest hindrance and deterrent to the cause of Christ that we can imagine. We look on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. And since God alone knows the heart, and God alone knows what is going to happen fifty years from now, and God alone knows the total results of what a little devotion in the present will produce in the next fifty years, God alone is able to judge what is really successful. We can't measure the success of any church or ministry apart from the standard of God's Word. A successful church is a church that is operating in accordance with God's Word even if nothing appears to be happening. A successful ministry is one that is operated according to God's Word, regardless of external results. By present-day standards, Isaiah would have been a failure, Jeremiah would have been a failure, Noah would have been a failure, and many other great servants of God would have been accounted failures also. But God didn't account them to be such, for in His eyes obedience and faithfulness are the key features of success. Donald Macleod suggests that

If we are to judge by results at all, then we must judge by the whole results, immediate and ultimate, near and remote. The public preaching of women converts and edifies. But is this all? Does it not strike immediately at the apostolicity of the Church, infringing the clear injunction "Let the women be in silence"?... will the mood...spread-indeed, has it not beyond all question spread-from the realm of order to the realm of doctrine....

Again, what is the effect upon the woman herself? Upon her modesty? Her femininity? Her submissiveness, and upon

her family? Who will fulfill the ministry to her husband and children which she has scorned?

Similarly, what will be the long-term effect on church discipline? If her Creator intended her for submissiveness, can the woman hope to cope with a situation requiring authoritativeness and assertiveness?

Above all, what of the offence given to the Head of the Church by the blatant infringement of His explicit command?... If we vex His Holy Spirit will He not turn to be our enemy? And then, no matter how spectacular the success of one illicit ministry—or even of several, will that compensate for the declension and apostasy of generations?

It is "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Hudson Taylor once said, "God's work done in God's way will never lack for God's supply." If we lack money to do the work of God, what should we do? Should we say, "I know that God says that the way that He supports His work is through the giving of His people, but our people don't have the money, our people won't give, so maybe we'd better have a bazaar or carnival or maybe we'd better have a church supper to raise money." No, no, if we have a shortage of money for God's work, we ought to get down on our knees and pray and plead with God until He supplies the need.

If there is a shortage of men to serve in the church, to go out to the mission field, to take the position of pastors, what should we do? Should we say, "I know what God's Word says, but but, but..." No, we ought to get down on our faces and plead with God and ask God

first for His forgiveness and then for His blessing. The Scriptures say, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will thrust forth laborers into His harvestfield." If there is a shortage of laborers we shouldn't say, "Well, let's see if there are some women who will go since the men won't go." We shouldn't say, "Maybe some of the women will serve as elders and deacons, since the men won't do it." No, we ought to get down on our knees and pray that God will raise up men who are willing to do the job that they ought to do.

Herbert Carson's

comments are appropriate here. He said, "Men candidates for the mission field are in short supply, yet 'God's way' clearly envisages the men as the leaders in the church in the new churches as well as in the old. Are we to say then that we must adjust ourselves to the present situation and use women? If we do, we simply perpetuate the present situation of things and men in the home churches will continue, with no sense of shame, to let women do the job that men ought to be doing."

A long time ago, the women should have said, "We are not going to do the jobs God intended men to do." By so doing, they would have put the men to shame. But as long as the man can send his woman to do the job that he ought to be doing, he can say, "I am doing my share, I am giving my wife, or my mother, or my daughter." But, how different it might be, if the women would say, "Look, honey, I love you and I will submit to you in every way in accordance with the Scriptures, but the Bible says it is not my place to lead in spiritual matters, I refuse to do it. It is your job." I say, women ought to be putting men to shame in many of our churches because of the way that men have shirked their responsibilities. With the excuse of busyness and tolerance we who are men have forced our women to

do jobs that God never intended them to do. And it is high time that we repent, forsake our sins and change our ways.

Herbert Carson continues, "Is it not time rather to challenge the churches with the present unbiblical practices and to call them to humble themselves before God that He might supply what is now lacking? Men can try to justify what is Scripturally unjustifiable. We should be calling churches and particularly the men in the churches to repentance. The very willingness of these women to go and to suffer should not be a matter for complacency but for shame and reproach that men are so indifferent to the spread of the Gospel."

Equality and Submission Explained

This teaching that men and men only are to lead in the churches and the home does not mean that women are constitutionally inferior. I am not saying, nor is the Bible saying, that women are, as far as their nature is concerned, constitutionally inferior to men. Citizens must be in subjection to the rulers, but that doesn't mean that citizens are constitutionally inferior to their rulers. It doesn't mean that citizens are any less important than the rulers, it just means that God planned it that way. God ordained that citizens should be subject to rulers because without it there would be anarchy. In the home, God said that children are to be subject to their parents. That doesn't mean that the child is inferior to the parent. It just means that God has planned it that way, and so that is the way it ought to be. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:17 that church members are to be in subjection to their elders. That doesn't mean that they are any less important, that doesn't mean

that they are inferior to their elders. Church members are to submit, and elders are to rule because that is the way God planned it. There must be elders, some must rule and some must follow, for God would have all things to be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 11:3 reads, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." The head of Christ is God. Does that mean that Jesus Christ is inferior to God, the Father constitutionally? No, He is very God of very God. He is equal with God, the Father in omniscience and omnipotence, in every way, and yet while he was here on earth as our Redeemer and Mediator, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All the while He was here on earth, he was in subjection or submission to His Father. He was not inferior. He was everything that He had been throughout all eternity, but in the plan of God, for the purpose of our salvation, it was ordained that Jesus Christ for a time would humble Himself and take orders from God, the Father, just as you and I take orders.

When Jesus Christ, the Son of God was here on earth, Luke 2 tells us that He was in subjection to Mary and Joseph. He who made Mary and Joseph, He the creator, placed Himself in subjection to the creature. Was He inferior to Mary and Joseph? Of course not, for He was very God of very God. And the fact that God has said that women are to be in subjection and submission doesn't mean that they are inferior. That is not the teaching of the Bible.

William Hendrickson, in his very excellent commentary on the book of 1 Timothy, says this:

Though these words in 1 Timothy 2:11 and 12 and their parallel in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 may sound a trifle unfriendly, in reality, they are the very opposite. In fact, they are expressive of the feeling of tender sympathy and basic understanding. They mean: let a woman not enter a sphere of activity for which by dint of her very creation she is not suited. Let not a bird try to dwell under water. Let not a fish try to live on land. Let not a woman try to exercise authority over a man by lecturing him in public worship. For the sake both of herself and the spiritual welfare of the church such unholy tampering with the divine authority is forbidden.

In a similar vein, Robert Dabney declares that Paul

does not say that the woman must not preach in public because he regards her as less pious, less zealous, less eloquent, less learned, less brave or less intellectual than man. In the advocates of woman's right to this function there is a continual tendency to a confusion of thought, as though the apostle, when he says that a woman must not do what a man does, meant to disparage her sex. This is a sheer mistake... woman is excluded from this masculine task of public preaching by Paul, not because she is inferior to man, but simply because her Maker has ordained her for another work which is incompatible with this. So he might have pronounced, as nature does, that she shall not sing bass, not because he thought the bass chords the more beautiful—perhaps he thought the pure alto of the feminine throat far sweeter—but because her very constitution fits her for the latter part in the concert of human existence, and

therefore unfits her for the other, the coarser and less melodious part.

Somewhere along the line someone has sold us a bill of goods that it is more pleasant to lead than it is to follow. This is not necessarily true, for leadership brings problems, difficulties, and heartaches that followers never experience. God has planned and made women to be dependent upon men so that men will protect, provide, and care for the women. Any husband who truly loves his wife and desires to be the proper head of the home knows that this is no easy task. Sometimes it would be much more pleasant to follow than to lead. And any elder who truly loves the Lord and desires to be the proper leader of the church, knows that this is no easy task. Many have been the times when I wanted to run from the responsibilities of the eldership. Many have been the times when I have gone to my knees before God to tell Him, "It's too much for me." And I know many other elders who have done the same thing. I am not an elder merely because I want to be. I am an elder because God, up to this point, has called me and ordained me to the eldership. There have been times when, if left to myself, I would have resigned from the ministry and sat out there in the pews and let someone else have the responsibilities and the problems of leadership. The awesome task of Sunday after Sunday and day after day ministering to the people of God, knowing that their spiritual welfare and edification depends to a large extent on me, is an overwhelming task.

Any person who takes seriously the Biblical qualifications and tasks for elders will certainly know what Paul was talking about when he spoke of daily, inescapable pressure that his care and concern for the church brought upon him (2 Corinthians 11:28). I tell you it is an

awesome job, as well as a great privilege. to be an overseer of the flock of God. And it is a tremendous privilege to be properly directed, guided, fed, and governed. Robert Dabney was certainly speaking a great truth when he asserted

Doubtless that spirit of willfulness, which is a feature of our native carnality in both man and woman, tempts us to feel that any subordination is a hardship.... But self will forget that order is heaven's first law; that subordination is the inexorable condition of peace and happiness, and this as much in heaven as on earth; that this subjection was not imposed on woman only as a penalty, but as for her and her offspring's good; and that to be governed under the wise conditions of nature is often a more privileged state than to govern.

This teaching then does not imply that women are constitutionally inferior or less privileged than men.

Furthermore, this teaching does not mean that women have nothing to do for Christ. That is just not true. There is much that women may do for Christ. There is no cause for women to be frustrated and say, "Oh, I love my Saviour, but there is nothing I can do to show that love." Oh, there is so much that women may rightly do for Christ. And I assure you that the jobs that God gives women the privilege of doing are every bit as important as the jobs that God has given to men to do. True it is, that the tasks and responsibilities of women in the church are not in every respect identical to those that men are to perform, but true it is also, that the women's tasks are of utmost and strategic importance in the ongoing work of Jesus Christ in His church.

WHAT WOMEN MAY DO IN THE CHURCH

In the preceding chapter, we considered the women's place from a negative point of view. In this chapter, I want to consider what the Scriptures say about the place of women in the church from a positive point of view.

The Bible's High Regard for Women

Contrary to what many people might think, the Bible presents women and their work in a very favorable light. In the Old Testament and New Testament women are spoken of with deep appreciation and respect for their persons and their work.

The Old Testament says in Proverbs 12:4, "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband." In other words, a virtuous woman is the most precious possession that a man has. A king is proud of his crown. It is the symbol of his authority and his position. He doesn't hide it in a closet because it is worth something to him. Similarly, a virtuous woman is the crown of her husband.

Proverbs 31:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies." Rubies were among the most precious stones of that day. In fact, they probably were the most precious stones. Solomon says, "If you have a virtuous woman, don't trade her for anything, not for all the rubies in the world. Her value is far above rubies." Later in the same chapter, the Bible says, "... a woman who feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." God says children ought to call good mothers blessed and husbands ought to praise wives who fear the Lord.

In the Old Testament, we have the record of many great women. Sarah, Hannah, Ruth, Naomi, the Shunammite woman, and

numerous others are spoken of with great respect and appreciation. In the Old Testament many laws were given specifically to protect women. This was very unusual because in most societies, a woman was a slave, a chattel of her husband who had almost no rights and certainly very little protection. If the husband got tired of the wife, he could just tell her to get out. In some societies he had absolute power over his wife. But when you come to the Scriptures and see the high regard God places upon women, you immediately see the difference. In Exodus 2:22, 23, God says, if you dare to lay a hand upon a widow, I will kill you, because that widow is precious to me. As you go through the rest of the Pentateuch, you find law after law to protect women from cruel, sinful men who might mistreat them.

Christ's Treatment of Women

The New Testament manifests the same genuine appreciation and respect for women. In the Gospel accounts, it is clear that the Lord had tremendous respect for women. When the Syrophenician woman, in Mark 7, came to him, he didn't refuse her request. He healed her daughter and afterwards our Lord said of this woman, "I have not seen anybody with greater faith in all of Israel." What a commendation! When he was in Capernaum, a woman, who had an issue of blood for 12 years, came and touched him on the hem of his garment. Our Lord healed her and then he turned around and talked to her. With genuine love, he said, "Daughter, go in peace thy faith hath made thee whole." He didn't just overlook her, he healed her and gave her peace. He was concerned about this woman and showed great respect and appreciation. When He illustrated the kind of prayers we should make to God, he chose the illustration of a widow in Luke 18. When he came to the well of Jacob in John 4, a

woman came and he spent a long time talking to this sinful, immoral woman whom most people ignored. Some of the rabbis of that day told men, "Don't bother talking to a woman, even if she is your wife." Some men put their wives in the back part of the houses and the only thing they did was cook, clean, and take care of the children. When the men wanted entertainment they brought in some concubines. As already noted, in many cases the woman was not much more privileged than a slave, but here our Lord shows genuine respect unto a woman.

When the Pharisees came dragging a woman into the temple before a group of people, and accused her of adultery, our Lord showed concern for this woman. He wanted to take the attention off of her, so he stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then he said, "He, that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." He didn't allow these men to browbeat this woman, but shielded her from their cruelty.

When our Lord taught a lesson on real giving, he chose the illustration of a widow giving her last two mites. When our Lord rose from the dead on Easter morning, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven demons.

Women in the Early Church

In Acts 5:14, we read of a multitude of men and women who were saved. Among the women were many widows for whom the church had great concern. In order that these widows, who didn't have Social Security or pension plans, would be supported some Christians gave of their means. Some even sold their homes and properties to create a fund for these widows and other needy Christians.

In Acts 9, a woman by the name of Dorcas died. This woman was held in such high esteem that the news of her death was sent to Peter with the request that he would come immediately. Peter quickly responded and Dorcas was raised from the dead. When the man Stephen died, the Lord didn't raise him from the dead, but here is a woman whom God raised from the dead. A woman was the first person to be raised from the dead in the book of Acts, demonstrating God's regard for the female sex.

Later in the book of Acts, we read of a woman named Lydia, who was evidently highly regarded by the Apostle Paul. We also read of Priscilla and again it is clear that the Apostle Paul had deep respect for her. In Romans 16 we read of Phebe and Mary, and the mother of Rufus, and of Julia, whom the Apostle Paul says "is of note," or "well known among the Apostles."

Biblical Honor Given to Wives

Ephesians 5, likewise evidences the regard of Christianity for women, for the Bible tells men that they are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. As Christ gave Himself for the church, so husbands are to give themselves for their wives. They are to nourish them and cherish them and seek to sanctify and cleanse them. Furthermore the Bible says that men are to love their wives as they love themselves and treat them as they treat themselves. 1 Peter 3:7 also manifests the Biblical evaluation of women. It says, "Likewise ye husbands dwell with wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." Husbands are admonished to treat their wives as fine pieces of silver or China. Husbands are reminded that their wives are heirs

together with them of the grace of life. Wives are not second class citizens of heaven who are somehow of lesser importance to God. No, they are joint heirs, equal heirs with their husbands of the grace of God. When husbands forget this, Peter says, their prayers will be hindered, for God highly values the women.

The Bible's high esteem for women is also indicated by the way that Jesus gladly received the help and ministry of numerous women (Luke 8:2-3), and by the fact that even Paul, whom some accuse of being a woman hater, acknowledged with appreciation that women had labored with him in the Gospel (Phil. 4:3). It is, therefore, abundantly clear that to say that the Bible will not permit women to do certain things in the church does not mean that God does not highly value their persons. Nor does it mean that women have no service to render for Christ and His Kingdom. Indeed, a serious study of the Bible reveals that women have important and varied services to perform for Christ.

Legitimate Ministries for Women

Well, what are some of these legitimate ministries? To answer this question, I want to direct your attention to a few of many Bible verses which speak to this issue.

1 Corinthians 11:5 asserts that "... every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." This is certainly one of the most difficult passages of the Bible. What does this verse mean when it refers to a woman "prophesying"? There are some that suggest that this word "prophesying" is a synonym for preaching. They affirm that the Apostle Paul clearly sanctions women preachers in this verse and gives to women the right to exposit the

Scriptures in the public assembly of the saints. But I remind you that if this is true, the Apostle Paul contradicted this teaching in 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35. I can't believe that under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he could do such a thing. There is no question about what he means in Chapter 14. The issue cannot be evaded. 1 Corinthians 14 declares that a woman should be silent in the church. She should not speak because, it is a shame for a woman to speak in the public assembly of the saints and because it is against the law of God.

Furthermore, if 1 Corinthians 11:5 teaches that a woman may preach in the church, then it also contradicts what Paul explicitly and clearly states in 1 Timothy 2:9-11 where women are commanded not to teach nor to usurp authority over men but to be in silence. Because of the teaching of these passages of Scripture, I am sure that 1 Corinthians 11:5 does not mean that it is proper for a woman to teach in the public assembly of the saints.

When you study the Word of God and find the preponderance of Scripture passages to be teaching one thing, but another passage of Scripture seems to be teaching something else, you should not take the exception and interpret the many clear passages by the exception. You should rather interpret the obscure or exceptional passage in the light of the general teaching of the rest of Scripture, believing that somehow this passage must be in agreement with the rest of Scripture. Since 1 Corinthians 11:5 appears to be so out of line with the rest of Scripture, it cannot be used to support the public preaching of women.

One very possible explanation of this passage is that Paul is talking about prophesying in a technical or charismatic sense, that is, in

the sense of direct revelation. Sometimes prophesying is referring to a supernatural gift from God, which is connected with direct revelation. The message of the prophet is something fresh and comes straight from God to the people without the use of the Bible. There were prophets like this in the Old and New Testaments. 1 Corinthians 12:29 is referring to this kind of prophet. Paul asks, "Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers?" Here a clear distinction is made between teachers and prophets. A teacher is one who takes the already existing Scriptures and explains them and applies them to the people. A prophet is one who gets his message directly from God. In 1 Corinthians 13:8, we read "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." Prophecy in the sense of supernatural gifts and new revelations shall fail, because when the whole sixty-six books of the Bible had been given to us, we no longer needed direct revelation. Then the age of prophecy was closed and God ceased giving us direct revelation. Today we no longer have or need prophets of this charismatic nature in the church. The Bible is a completed canon. In it we have all that we need for life and godliness.

Herbert Carson interprets 1 Corinthians 11:5 in this way. He says:

It is important to emphasize the special character of prophecy. The prophet in the Bible is one who comes with a direct word from God. His message has been directly revealed to him so that he is the oracle or mouthpiece of the Lord. There is a clear distinction between such immediate inspiration and the teaching ministries of one, who while called by God and authorized by the church, has the task of explaining and expounding the Scriptures which have already been given. We talk about prophetic preaching but of

course we are using the term loosely, just as we are when we talk of apostolic preaching; for just as the preacher is not really an apostle, he is not really a prophet. Prophecy is a quite unusual and extraordinary gift and it is quite understandable that in the days of the acts of the apostles when all of the canon of the New Testament had not been given that prophetic inspiration should be prominent as God revealed preaching. In this unusual ministry, women undoubtedly played a part. But we must not make what is extraordinary the norm for regular use. Calvin's comments on I Timothy 2:11-13, are appropriate here. Calvin says, 'If anyone challenges this ruling by citing the case of Deborah and other women of whom we are told at one time that God appointed them to govern the people, the obvious answer is that God's extraordinary acts do not annul the ordinary rules by which he wishes us to be bound.'

Paul according to this view is referring to women who had a charismatic, supernatural gift from God; to women who were bringing direct revelation. Thus 1 Corinthians 11:5 does not open the pulpit door to every woman, but perhaps to those who had been supernaturally endowed by God with direct revelation. And since the age of direct revelation is over, this passage doesn't give women the right in our day to speak in the church.

This verse, then, has nothing to say about women preachers and leaders. We must turn to other passages to discover the Bible's teaching on this matter. When we do, we are confronted by the strong statements of 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. And besides these passages, we must reckon with the fact that there were no women priests or women elders in the synagogues

and no women authors of Scriptures. There were two Old Testament books named after women, Ruth and Esther, but there is no evidence that any women ever wrote a book of Scripture.

In the New Testament, there were no women apostles, there were no women among the seventy sent out by Jesus in Luke 10, there were no women elders or deacons or pastors or authors of Scripture. There were prophetesses such as Anna and the daughters of Philip. But there is no indication that these women regularly functioned as the Lord's messengers to mixed groups of worshippers. If these women did prophesy, it seems most likely and in keeping with the rest of Scripture that they ministered to women and children and not men. If, therefore, 1 Corinthians 11:5 is sanctioning women prophesying, Paul may have been speaking of women prophesying to women and children.

Richard Lenski in his commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians, says:

In many places a woman may speak and teach even publicly, but in no place where she may exercise dominion over a man by her teaching.

In another place, Lenski comments:

It is evident then that women too were granted the gift of prophecy... and they are to exercise this valuable gift in the ample opportunities that offer themselves. So Paul writes "praying and prophesying" with reference to the woman just as he does with reference to the men. The public assemblies of the congregation are however not among these opportunities—note "en, tais, ekklesiais"—in the assembly (14:34). At other places and other times women are free to

exercise their gift of prophecy. In the present connection Paul has no occasion whatever to specify regarding this point... the teaching ability of Christian women today has a wide range of opportunity without in the least intruding itself into the public congregational assemblies.

This is one possible way of harmonizing 1 Corinthians 11:5 with the teaching of the rest of the Bible.

Public Worship and Women's Participation

There is, however, another explanation of this text which seems to me to be even better. John Gill and other commentators tell us that the word which is translated "prophecy" may mean to praise. The word is sometimes used with this meaning in the Scriptures. 1 Chronicles 25:1 speaks of men prophesying with their harps. How do you prophecy with your harp? A harp does not speak words; it simply makes music. It is clear that this verse means that men were worshipping and praising God with their harps. Other passages of the Old Testament also use this word with the meaning of praise. John Gill suggests that when Paul refers to women in 1 Corinthians 11:5, he is not talking about women preaching or prophesying, but women engaging in the act of public worship or public praise. As they come together to worship with the saints, they join with the pastor when he prays; they join with the pastor when he preaches. When he prophesies, they are prophesying also. Acts 2:14 relates that when Peter stood up to preach, the eleven stood up with him. Romans 15 avers that Christians ought to glorify God with one mind and one voice. Since the church is a body, what one member of the body does, in some sense, every member of the body does. When the pastor preaches, the whole congregation of the church

preaches through him. In the first place, the pastor is in the pulpit because the church ordained him to the ministry. They saw in him the gifts that are requisite for the ministry, and they said, "God has called him to be a pastor. Let's acknowledge that call and publicly set him apart for the work of the ministry." Furthermore, when the pastor preaches, the Christians in the church are praying for him, they are listening to him, they are agonizing over sinners and souls in the congregation along with him. When he preaches he is simply an extension of them; it is not he alone who preaches, it is the church that preaches. With one heart and voice, God is worshipped and Christ is proclaimed, even if one man is doing most of the speaking. This may be what Paul has in mind when he speaks of women prophesying and praying in 1 Corinthians 11:5. Donald Macleod states:

It is possible that praying and prophesying represent, in summary, the whole act of public worship and that "any woman praying or prophesying" represents simply her participation in public worship. In this case the question before the Apostle's mind has nothing to do with the public speaking of women. He is dealing with something that is a matter of serious concern in the early church—the question of female dress. Christian women commonly distorting the doctrine of Christian liberty, were turning up at public worship dressed in a way that shocked the pagans, and giving rise to the charge that immorality was prevalent among believers. Peter faces this problem in 1 Peter 3:3, 4, where he writes "whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the

heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." With specific reference to public worship, Paul gives similar directions in 1 Timothy 2:9 "... that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety: not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." This may likewise be the concern of 1 Corinthians 11:5. Women were coming to the assembly with their heads uncovered; which, says the apostle, "is even all one as if they were shaven." That is, so far as the pagans were concerned, they were prostitutes. This may have been the problem that Paul was facing: is it right for women to appear in public or to participate in public worship with their heads uncovered? When he takes up separately and independently the other question, may the women speak in the public assembly? his reply is an emphatic negative: "Let the women be silent."

Paul according to this view is not addressing the matter of women preachers in this passage. He is rather giving instructions concerning the importance of being properly dressed at the worship services. And while this verse does not make it legitimate for women to preach in the public assembly of the saints, it certainly implies that it is proper for women to join in the public worship of God. When the church of the Bible met, women were permitted to be there joining in acts of public worship. In Deuteronomy 12:10-12, God says, "But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit... then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there: thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt

offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord: And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your *daughters*, and your men-servants, and your *maid-servants*, and the Levite that is within your gates." In Psalm 68:24-26, we are told that women sang in the choir and played musical instruments in the public worship of the saints. So I take it from these facts, that it is proper for women to sing in the choir and play instruments in the church. In Luke 2:36-38, Anna prayed and gave thanks in the presence of other people. So I take it from this occurrence that it is proper for women to give thanks unto God in the presence of other people. In Mark 5:25-34, where our Lord heals the woman who had an issue of blood, he asks her to tell what happened in the presence of other people. Our Lord was seeking the public testimony of this woman. In John 4. He meets a woman from Sychar. After she had come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, she went back to her town and said, "Come see a man who told me all things I ever did." As a result of her testimony, almost the whole town came out to see the Lord Jesus and many of them believed on the Lord because of her testimony. Our Lord in no way reproved her for testifying to men. In John 20:17, our Lord Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection and specifically commissioned her along with some other women to go to men and tell them that the Lord had risen from the dead. From these incidents I draw that the Bible allows women to participate fully in acts of public worship as long as they are not engaging in public teaching and exercising authority over men.

Women and Child-Rearing

In Timothy 5:9-14, we have a list of things that Christian women may do for Jesus Christ. In verse 10 we are told that it is proper for women to bring up children. In 1 Timothy 2:15 we read that women shall be saved in childbearing. In 1 Timothy 5:14 we read that the younger women should marry and bear children. And then in 1 Timothy 5:10, we are told that women should bring up children. Children, according to these verses, are the women's special domain. Children are to be their special concern. The word that is translated "brought" in verse 10, is the identical word that is used in Ephesians 6:4, where the Scriptures say, "Fathers provoke not your children to wrath but 'bring' them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." What does "bring them up" involve? It doesn't simply involve bringing them up physically. It also involves bringing them up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It involves every area and every aspect of the child's life. The domain of the woman is the child, whether it be the social, physical, emotional, or spiritual aspect of the child's life.

In Exodus 20:12, the fifth commandment says. "Honor thy father and thy mother..." In God's eyes the mother must be honored just as much as the father. Exodus 21:15 states that if a child smites the father or the mother, he shall be surely put to death. Exodus 21:17 declares that if a child curses his father or mother, he shall be put to death. In God's eyes despising and disobeying the mother is just as serious as despising and disobeying the father.

The book of Proverbs is replete with illustrations that admonish children to give equal respect to fathers and mothers. Proverbs 1:8 states, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not

the law of thy mother." Proverbs 6:20 says, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Proverbs 30:17 asserts, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Again and again, children are instructed to obey their mothers just as they obey their fathers. Again and again, God says that he will punish children for disobedience to the mother even as he will punish children for disobedience to the father.

Certainly if children are the special domain of women, women ought to, if possible, have children. There are times when it may be physically impossible for a woman to have children, but when she can have them, she ought to have them. And when she does have them, she ought to bring them up. Think of the contribution that the mother of Samuel made to the world by bringing up Samuel properly. Think of the contribution that the mother of James and John made to the world and the church of Christ by bringing them up properly. Think of the contribution that Lois and Eunice made to the world and the church by properly bringing up Timothy. In a very real sense the old adage which declares that "the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world" is true. Women can make a tremendous contribution to the world from the bottom up instead of from the top down.

Ministering to Children and Young Women

But what about the women who don't have children or what about the women whose children have departed from the home? Is their ministry over? No, because there is still much that they can do for children. If they don't have any children of their own, they ought to

find some children and help bring them up. They can invite the children of others into their homes. They can have fun with these children and talk to them about the Saviour. There are some parents that have more than one child. They have much to do and women without children can have a tremendous influence on the lives of these children who may need more adult supervision and attention than their parents can give. Women can invite children into their homes one by one and make them feel as though they are special. They can take them places and demonstrate that someone really cares. Women have a special gift for working with children. God has given that gift to them and they ought to use it. Women ought to be seeking out the little ones and leading them to Jesus. Parents have often said things again and again to their children; they have exhorted and rebuked them, but when that same exhortation and rebuke comes from someone else, it sometimes means as much, if not more, than the exhortation and rebuke of the parents. Women may never know the extent of the influence that they have in the lives of children until they get to heaven, but they may be assured that their influence is great.

Sometimes older women say, "Well, I have had my children. I have brought them up and now I am on vacation. I don't want anything to do with children anymore. I am through now." It grieves my heart to hear mothers talk like that. How selfish can they be? God has given them wisdom through years of experience and yet they say, "I don't want to get involved, I don't want those problems again." The Scripture says in Titus 2, that the older women have a responsibility to the younger women. The older women are to teach the younger women to be sober by their example and by their conversation. They ought to teach the younger women to love their husbands and

children, to be discreet, to be chaste, to be keepers at home, to be obedient to their own husbands, to be good in order that the Word of God be not blasphemed. Older ladies ought to teach and teach and then teach some more because they have had years of experience. And young women ought to teach the even younger women what they have learned through their searching the Scriptures and through their Christian experience. This is the women's responsibility.

Since there are more women and children in the world than men, what a mission field women have. Some women complain, "I don't have anything to do for Christ." But the women who say that usually are looking for an excuse because they don't want to do anything for Christ. Women can never say that they have nothing to do for Christ until they have taught every child and every woman in their church and in their community everything that they know about the word of God. Until they have done that, they have no right to say, "I don't have enough to do." These are ministries that women can often perform better than men, because there are problems among children and women that women can deal with better than men. Women may open up to other women about personal problems which would be improper to discuss with men. Women can understand the emotional makeup and disposition of other women better than men. Men don't have a woman's outlook and so in many respects women can minister to children and to women better than men.

Hospitality as a Christian Ministry

Another ministry which is the proper realm of women is the ministry of lodging strangers. The women are to practice hospitality. The

women are to have open homes and open hearts. Every woman ought to strive to have the gift of hospitality because she is the one who is primarily responsible for it in the home. I am convinced that in the home it is the woman who really makes the difference as far as hospitality is concerned. She is the one who makes you feel welcome.

1 Peter 4:9 instructs all Christians to use hospitality to one another without grudging. Romans 12:13 commands Christians to be addicted to hospitality. But while it is the responsibility of all Christians, women usually have a greater capacity for hospitality than men. In the Old Testament, we have the case of the woman who kept the upstairs room ready at all times so that whenever the prophet Elisha came by he knew there was a place for him to stay. The Bible indicates that he stayed there often. This woman was addicted to hospitality and I am sure that her hospitality was a tremendous encouragement to the prophet Elisha. In the New Testament, there was Lydia, who insisted that Paul and his friends stay at her house. The Bible says, "When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16:15). This woman was given to hospitality and her hospitable spirit must have been a tremendous encouragement to Paul, especially in light of the treatment that he had received in other places previously and the treatment he would soon thereafter receive. In Romans 16, Paul mentions several other women who were serving Christ faithfully in the area of hospitality: he talks about Phebe, who was a succorer of many; he talks about Priscilla, who willingly gave of herself for Paul and other Christians;

and he talks about the mother of Rufus and adds that she is my mother too.

Women have a tremendous talent for mothering and since there are so many lonely and unhappy people in the world, they have great opportunities for Christian service. In almost every congregation, there are young people who have no Christian families. They have no "moms" and "dads" who love Jesus Christ. They don't know where to turn for Christian fellowship and counsel. What an opportunity for Godly women to fill the void. When I was in seminary, my wife and I lived a long distance from our families. We loved each other and loved Christ, but we missed the fellowship of our families. One family in the church where I was assistant pastor sensed our need and took us under their wing. Without being overbearing, they began to prudently watch over us. They became our "mom" and "dad" away from home, and at that time in our lives, they were a tremendous blessing to us. The man was a great help to us, but I am sure it was the woman who was mainly responsible for making us feel so much at home.

Washing the Feet of the Saints

Washing the feet of the saints is another ministry that women may legitimately perform in the church. This may mean literally washing the saints' feet, if the saints' feet need to be washed. In Paul's day with open sandals and dusty roads, it was a necessity to wash the feet of people when they came into the house. Women, therefore, literally washed people's feet, but in our day and age, I think primarily this phrase should be interpreted figuratively. When the husband of Abigail died, David sent a message to Abigail in which he told her that he would make her his wife. She replied, "Let thy

handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." What did she mean? She meant, "David, I am willing to do the most humble and menial tasks that you have for me." Psalm 84:10 says, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." The women of the New Testament ministered to the physical needs of Jesus. They ministered to him out of their substance. They did anything that Jesus needed to have done. And when the Scriptures say that women ought to wash the feet of the saints, I think it means they must be willing to do the most humble and menial tasks. This is what Dorcas did in Acts 9. Dorcas didn't preach. She wasn't an elder or even a deacon, but she washed the feet of the saints by making coats for the widows who needed them.

There are so many tasks that women can do for Christ if they only will. There are tasks that need to be done around the chapel which women can very capably accomplish. There are windows to be washed; there are floors to be swept; there are curtains and drapes to be made; there is typing to be done; there are records to be kept; there are messages that need to be taken off tape recorders and put down on paper so that they may be printed for others to read. There are missionaries that need to be contacted. There are people who need assistance from time to time in physical and material ways. Recently, for example, my mother had to stay in the home taking care of my father for several months. He was so sick that she couldn't leave him. Some Christian women could have performed a very needed ministry by volunteering to stay with my father on Sunday so that my mother could attend church. There are children who get sick and remain sick for long periods of time. What a ministry women may perform by calling the mothers who have this

daily responsibility and volunteering to come over and take care of the sick children. There are people who have large families and large responsibilities who get behind in the performance of the daily chores and women may perform a very helpful ministry by doing the wash that has piled up or by preparing some dinners or by volunteering to help clean the house. These are all illustrations of what it means to wash the feet of the saints. Women may not get their names in the church bulletin or in the town newspaper for doing these things, but God keeps a record of what they do. The Scriptures say that when we give a cup of cold water in his name, he rewards us. Women who are faithfully involved in the ministry of washing the feet of the saints, may be assured that they will not lose their reward.

Helping the Afflicted

1 Timothy 5:10 also indicates that women may assist or help the afflicted. Who are the afflicted? James 1:26 says that the afflicted are the widows and the orphans. Genesis 16:10 calls Hagar, who was despised and cast off by Abraham and Sarah, an afflicted woman. Exodus 3:7 relates that the people of Israel were afflicted with heavy burdens. James 5:10, 11 says that the prophets and Job were afflicted people because they were despised by others. An afflicted person is anyone who has problems, whether they are financial, physical, emotional or spiritual.

The Scriptures say that women may relieve the afflicted. God has evidently given them gifts in this area, and if God has indicated that this is an area of service legitimate for them, and given them the requisite gifts, then this ministry is their responsibility. Are there any afflicted people around us? Are there any people with burdens

around us? Well, until there are no afflicted people or burdened people in the world, women have plenty to do for Christ.

1 Timothy 5:13 suggests one other thing that women may do for Christ. It speaks about women going around from house to house, and learning to be idle, and not only idle, but gossips and busybodies, talking about things that are not proper to mention. Every commentator and expositor that I have read, agrees that Paul is not saying that women shouldn't go from house to house. If they do not go from house to house, how can they relieve the afflicted or wash the feet of the saints? What he is opposing is idleness which sometimes causes gadding about or is the result of gadding about. He is saying that if women neglect other responsibilities to go from house to house, it is wrong. He is saying that if they gad about from house to house simply because they like to be sociable, entertaining, and informed, they are tragically in error. He is condemning wrong motives for visitation and neglect of even more binding responsibilities.

Keepers at Home

Titus 2:5 instructs women to be keepers at home. 1 Timothy 5:14 admonishes women to guide their houses. Women are not to sit around in a lounge chair watching television all day; nor are they to gad about all day visiting friend Mary and Susan and Jane. No, they are to be busy, and their main responsibility is always in the home. They are to guide the house. This involves planning and this involves management. True, it is that everything women do, if they have husbands, is to be under the supervision and with the approval of their husbands. True, it is that, if they have husbands, they ought never to do anything that they know would be contrary to their

husband's desires unless the husband's desires are contrary to the Word of God. But true it also is that within the context of the home women have *grave responsibilities and great authority*. These responsibilities must never be neglected to gad about on visitation. Visitation must never be an excuse for indolence, but this does not mean that women may not perform the ministry of visitation. What Paul condemns is the idleness and not the visitation of women.

But Paul is not only condemning idleness which may be associated with gadding about; he is also condemning the wrong kind of conversation that often takes place when people get together. 1 Timothy 5:13 talks about those who are tattlers and busybodies. It is proper for women to go on visitation, but when they go, they must make sure that they do not gossip. Women ought to stay at home, if they are going out to gossip or slander or tear down the reputation of others. In our time, women because of the telephone don't even have to go out of their homes to gossip. Women, therefore, need to be careful in the use of their telephones. Women need to remember that God hears every word that they say and that for every idle word that they shall speak, they shall give an account on the day of judgment. The Scriptures command that we are to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouths but that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. The Scriptures say that we are to teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. The Bible asserts that our speech is always to be seasoned with salt, and the best way I know to have salty speech is to talk much about the Bible. When women visit, they should make sure that they take their Bibles along to teach and admonish others with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. When

women do that, they won't have to worry about the propriety of their visitation or conversation. Women may go from house to house as long as they are ministering the Word of God to women and children.

The Importance of Women's Work

These then, *are some of the things* that women may do for Christ and the church. And I am sure that any open-minded person will realize that there is more than enough to keep women, who really want to work, busy for Christ. I also am sure that any open-minded person will realize that the tasks that God has assigned to the women are not insignificant, but very important. In fact, they are every bit as important as the tasks that God has assigned to the men. They are different in some respects from the tasks of men, but just because they are different doesn't mean that they are unimportant. Robert Dabney had this to say about the work of women:

God has assigned to her a private sphere sufficiently important and honorable to justify the whole expenditure of angelic endowments—the formation of the character of children. This is the noblest and most momentous work on earth. Add to it, the efforts of friendship, the duties of the daughter, sister, wife and charitable almoner, and the labors of authorship suitable for women, and we see a field wide enough for the highest talents and sanctified ambitions. Does self-will feel that somehow the sphere of the pulpit orator is more splendid still? Wherein? Only in that it has features which gratify carnal ambitions and the lust for carnal applause of men. But let it be noted that Christians

are forbidden to have these (carnal, sinful) desires! Let, then, the Christian comply with God's law requiring him to crucify ambition and the only features which make any difference between the private and the public spheres of soul culture are gone. The Christian, who in the performance work of rearing souls for heaven, fosters the ambitious motive has deformed his worthiness in the task with a defilement that sinks him far below that of the humblest peasant mother who is training her child for God. Does the objector return to the charge that while the faithful mother rears six or possibly twice six children for God, the gifted evangelist may convert thousands? But that man would not have been the gifted evangelist had he not enjoyed the blessing of the modest Christian mother's training. Had he been reared in the disorderly home of the clerical Mrs. Jellyby, instead of being the spiritual father of thousands, he would have been an ignorant rabble or disgusting pharisee. So that the worthiness of his public success belongs fully as much to his modest mother as to himself. Again, the instrumentality of a mother's training and the salvation of her children is mighty and decisive; the influence of the minister over his hundreds, is slight and non-essential. If he contributes a few grains in numerous cases to turn the scales to heaven, the mother contributes tons to the right scales in her few cases. The one works more widely on the surface, the other more deeply. So that the real amount of soil moved by the two workmen is not usually in favor of the preacher. The woman of sanctified ambition has nothing to regret as to the dignity of her sphere. She does the most noble work that is done on earth. Its public recognition is

usually more through the children and beneficiaries she ennobles than through her own person. True, and that is precisely the feature of her work which makes it most Christlike. It is precisely the feature at which a sinful and selfish nature takes offense.

Dabney asserts that it is this feature of being behind the scenes and not getting glory for it in the eyes of men that causes some selfish, ambitious women to take offense at the role God has prescribed for them in life. He is saying that the woman who rebels at the task that God has given her to do is first of all, blind, because she doesn't see that she has some of the most important tasks in the world to do. Secondly, she is sinful and selfish, because there can only be one reason why she is not satisfied with her tasks and that is because she wants public recognition.

Contentment in God's Design

In Genesis 3, when the devil came to Eve, he said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Now that was not true. God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." The devil, however, wanted to focus attention on what she couldn't do. And that is what the devil is doing with women today. He is suggesting to women that men are using them as their slaves and servants. He encourages them to stand up and let the men know that women have every right to do everything that men may do. The devil wants women to concentrate on the things they can't do, and let the other important things which they can and must do slide by. This is what is happening in our world today. The problems that we are having with our young people in the world and in the

church are often caused by the failure of women and men to fulfill the roles that God planned for them. Often these youths came from homes where women and men are rebelling at God's place for them in life. Often they come from churches where the men have sat back and the women have taken over, giving the children the idea that Christianity and serving Christ are for women only.

Conclusion

May God help women not to groan and complain about what they can't do, but instead to cheerfully and zealously perform their God-given ministries. And may God help us as men to fulfill our responsibilities, because when women and men are doing the jobs that they are supposed to do, God will get glory. Certainly that should be the desire of men and women, for the chief end of man, regardless of sex, is to glorify God. God said to the women, "You glorify me in doing these particular acts." He also said to the men, "You glorify me by doing other acts." May God help men and women to cheerfully submit to the will of God, for God's way is perfect.

