

## The role of a godly woman in an ungodly world

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal 3:26-29*

We are all equal in Christ, God does not play favorites. All who come to Him in repentance and faith proven by deeds are His '**Servants**' (*diakonos, diakoneo*) (translated **Deacon** only in 1Tim3:8,12) **Servant** in Rom16:1 **Ministers** in 1Th3:2, 1Tim4:6) Literally translated meaning merely: 'one who serves or ministers to others'. As Christ told His Disciples: *But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant* Matt23:11

This Word is applied to BOTH male and female servants of Jesus Christ, In Rom16:1 Phoebe, a '*servant*' of the church of Cenchrea is mentioned to be received in a manner worthy of the Saints and assist her in whatever business she has need of and further she has been a great helper of many. Priscilla (the wife of Aquila) is also mentioned as a fellow worker among the Gentiles (having helped to school Apollo in the faith, Acts18:26) who risk life and limb for the Gospel. It goes on to mention Mary as a laborer in the faith and Junia who is numbered among the Apostles. (either as highly reputed among them or actually as one of them is unknown) But it is known that ancient women played an ongoing and very important role among the early Christians. They gave instruction to new converts, visited the sick and those imprisoned, performed various tasks in the assemblies and were powerful Witnesses of the faith.

As you can see the position of a Deacon (1Tim3:8-13) was that of a Servant ministering to others in the assembly in matters pertaining to the advancement of the faith. In Christ's own words ALL His true followers have this status as servants. Some of course must be appointed in larger assemblies to take on certain responsibilities so the needs of others will not be neglected. (as in Acts6) This would be equivalent to delegating responsibilities among a large group of workers. No one person is holding a 'higher' office or position than the others, but all are Ministering to the needs of the Saints.

The Word Bishop, translated from the Greek word *episkope* means: 'investigation, inspection or visitation', As you can see it is the transliterate of the Church word for '**Episcopal**' From which they derive the supposed authority of the office of a Bishop. (this has given the church its 'sacred' supremacy over the affairs of religion for centuries) Although it is described as a position of leadership in 1Tim3:1-7, Tit1:7, it was never designed to seize control over every aspect of the church and create a long list of regulations, rituals and ceremony to Lord over the fellowship. Church in the Scriptures is '*Ekklesia*' the called out ones, properly translated as an '*assembly*', it does not represent a sacred place of worship with steeples, stained glass windows, pulpits and pews. We MUST depart from the idea of 'Church' to understand the proper function of an '*Ekklesia*' from ancient times up through the changing customs of history.

Virtuous women have always had an important role in God's work and godly men have recognized their station and given them the proper respect and credit they deserve for their service. Cultural prejudice on the other hand has kept women in a reduced status for centuries, treated as mere property and the false church system has participated in this chauvinism using the Holy Scriptures to intimidate, keep down and silence any opposition. As a result to this day the role of a woman in the church is still much disputed and miss-understood by many people who wish to apply ancient traditions to modern thought. If we are to express true holiness under those guide lines we must all exchange our shoes for sandals and clothing for hand spun robes made of linen. As foolish as that sounds I think it's an accurate account of the present day men who think women are some kind of second class citizens in the Kingdom of God.

Obviously we cannot adapt ourselves to ancient culture and dress and suppose that makes us holy. Styles change with time and the manufacturing of fabrics follow. In any setting a truly godly person is **NOT** going to flaunt themselves in provocative styles or alluring clothing. Modesty is what matters most.

The point is that a person in obedience to the truth and pure in heart has no need of dress codes or self-imposed religion to restrain the indulgence of their flesh. Imposing these kinds of things on people is not going to purify their hearts, if they have not already done so through faith working by love, no amount of compulsory regulations is going to make it happen. True holiness comes from within when the eye is made single focused on Christ. The godly woman will exhibit the attributes of a gentle and peaceful temperament, which is a genuine Witness of the **FRUIT** of the Spirit. (kindness, goodness, self-control, etc)

*Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 1Pet3:3-4*

Erroneous preconceptions will miss-apply these types of passages to mean that a woman cannot wear make-up, jewelry (even a wedding ring!) brightly colored apparel or anything but long hair past her shoulders. It is merely an expression given in reference to the cultural times and places. In ancient times women were either slaves (prostitutes, servants) or wives. Therefore a godly woman in favor with her husband would **NEVER** adorn herself in the likeness of a prostitute! The arranging or '**plaiting**' of the hair was the manner of a harlot to attract her customers, plus in those times they often weaved ornaments of gold or fine silver into their braids and painted their faces in an alluring manner.

It's **NOT** that a godly woman is forbidden to fix her hair, wear a ring or brighten her face moderately. This is merely a reminder **HOW** a woman of God **WILL** conduct herself as the wife of a godly man. Jewish customs changed drastically from the time of Moses up to the advent of Christ, but the one thing that held true was that the conduct of a godly woman was obvious and she was always highly valued on earth!

***Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. Prov31:10-12***

To get a clear focus of how ancient standards fit into modern culture we must understand that present day society (especially the professing Christian establishment) is a huge **MESS**. The Bible addresses married women, widows and virgins, **NOT** unwed mothers, multiple divorcees and highly educated career girls. The more experienced married women are instructed to teach the younger unwed (virgins) keeping tabs on their purity and the older widows (of good report) are to be taken into the fellowship and highly regarded for their wisdom. Younger widows are naturally instructed to re-marry. (1Tim5:3-16) No provisions are made for the **obvious instances** of women coming into the faith from various states of impurity.

It's **ludicrous to assume** that the ancient assemblies did not have to deal with people coming into the faith out of every kind of immorality under the sun. Known prostitutes came to Christ for deliverance and a woman who had been married multiple times! Could it have been any different in the various cities where the Gospel was preached, women coming seeking redemption out of a life of ruin? Thus it is within this cultural melting pot that Paul wrote his Epistles to the Corinthians instructing them in propriety when they gathered for study and fellowship. So trying to rigidly apply the rules of order given in 1Cor14 and forbid women to even speak in assembly (Ekklesia properly translated, not church) is also ludicrous.

**The Corinthian assemblies were in disarray** due to their mixed culture and various customs. Paul was trying to restore order among them with the reminder that God was not the author of confusion, as mentioned: people interrupting the assembly, speaking out of turn, disrupting others in their attempt to gain understanding from the instruction. **Therefore when he told the woman to be silent he meant not to speak out of turn or chatter in the assembly.** In ancient times it was a general practice in assembly that women sit on one side and men on the other. If a woman was to suddenly call out to her husband (as some were doing in Corinth) asking him a question about the teaching it would disrupt the others. So this passage is merely re-ordered such out-bursts in a more formal setting.

Certainly Paul could not be contradicting himself by ordered women to *never* say a word, when he gave additional instructions on woman speaking in tongues, praying aloud and prophesying. (1Cor11:5, 14:5) Woman also receive influence form the Spirit in a witness, word of wisdom and teaching, that is obvious in the Scriptures and their contributions in the assembly are welcome as any man, Paul is imploring this all to be done in PROPER ORDER, that's all. Perverting it into legalist regulations is foolishness as is ignoring the role of a godly woman in assembly. Any woman submitted to God is going to conduct herself in a manner befitting her calling, in appearance, speech and piety.

Notice also this 1Cor11, 14 passages speaks to MARRIED women, assumed married to a godly man. Again we lack biblical instruction of the unwed, divorcee, immoral women who had **ALSO** come to a genuine saving faith and now required instruction and fellowship. Are they to be discarded as rubbish and walk among the Saints with bowed heads in perpetual silence? Again this is foolishness! If they have been redeemed by the blood and regenerated by the Spirit they have EVERY right and privilege of any Saint following Jesus. The stigma of their past lives is washed away; they are now engaged in the same battle against evil faced by everyone in Christ. If they are divorced or separated from an ungodly man, with children involved they will Stand fast in their witness and employ all their efforts to convert the children and influence all others involved and possibly re-marry in the Lord if the right situation arises.

**Remember:** the Primary thing is for all those in Christ to be Submitted to God first and then others in the fellowship. (Rom15:5,7) If a woman is without a husband then her head is **CHRIST** and she need not be ashamed among the others.

The much disputed portion of scripture in 1Tim2:8-15 is directed toward husbands and wives in the assembly. When Paul says '*I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man*', the word man in the passage is clearly translated '*Husband*'. He is saying that a wife is never to usurp authority over her husband, again in an assumed '*godly*' relationship. In the same sense that this applies to men in general we have the times and culture to consider. Just as Paul was reminding the women again not to assume the common immodest dress of Roman or Greek style, he is speaking also in a time when women were prohibited by law from holding public offices, or participating in the affairs of politics altogether. In Roman society they could not even appear as a witness in lawsuits or other matters. Many of these prohibitions on women have held true even into more modern history and are the main reason the Christian churches have been adverse to women preachers, but 1Cor11:5 must also be taken into consideration on this subject.

The Word: '*Prophesies*' in the passage can be translated not only as telling of future events, but also preaching or teaching as to refute, reprove, admonish or comfort. In Acts2:17-18 Peter tells of the Spirit leading young women (daughters) and even maidservants to Prophesy. Again in Acts21:9 four virgin daughters prophesied to Paul and also in Lk2:36 Anna a prophetess is mentioned. Consider too God using women in the Old Testament such as Deborah the Judge, Marian the older sister of Moses and Aaron, Huldah a contemporary of Jeremiah and Isaiah's wife used of God Isa8:3. We also must consider Satan using women as false prophetess like Jezebel and those mentioned in Ezk13:17-23.

The things spoken of in these passages 1Cor11, 14 were cautionary instructions in tune with the times in which the people lived. **Head coverings** for example were a standard custom among the Jews, Romans and Greeks. For a woman to appear in public without a veil (head-covering) was to take on the mantle of a prostitute and be disgraced. As punishment she would have her head shorn, which was also a custom in ancient times for any woman caught in immoral behavior. Although veils and head coverings are no longer customary in modern society (except among certain ethnic groups) the same disparity would hold true for a godly woman to appear in public wearing provocative clothing and flaunting her body. Or as a wife (married to a godly man) doing such things would be inappropriate, so it would be for any woman young or old, married or not, (if a professing Christian) to conduct herself indecently in a public setting.

Morales change over time and things that were considered inappropriate for a woman to do a few generations ago are no longer so. At the turn of the twentieth century Women in the US were still not permitted to vote or hold any public office. It was considered outrageous for a young lady to ride a bicycle or pursue higher education. She was to act accordingly, remain a virgin and seek a husband to start a family; that was her role, **NOT** that long ago! Do we return to these values to re-order our present day society? Granted today morals are up-side-down, nature (the nature of male & female) has been Reversed! We have a real **MESS** on our hands, but the fault lies **NOT** on the absence of old fashioned values, **BUT** on the counterfeit Gospel message being preached worldwide. The corrupting influence of sin is the real problem (always has been) with virtually **NO ONE** Saved from its Corruption, immorality is rampant.

Certainly the scales are tipped to the ultimate extreme where feminine decadence is concerned. But enforcing a stack of useless regulations dubbed 'biblical' is **NOT** the answer. Does anyone **REALLY** believe that Amish or Mennonite women are more '*holy*' than anyone else who professes godliness in our present day System of error? Just because they self-regulate in adherence to stick dress codes and lack of modern conveniences doesn't mean they have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires and neither have the men in these orders who treat their women like second class citizens crucified themselves in the Lord. (they don't even teach that Rom6:4-6 is necessary in repentance, so how can any of them be pure?)

Values have changed, for the worse, without question. **BUT** God forbid we put it all on the backs of women for the immoral things they do as professing Christians! If indeed the Men are ordained to be in charge let them take the lead to Repent of all this present day non-sense called the gospel and start **PREACHING THE TRUTH!** Bring people truly from Darkness to Light and the Power of Satan to God and see the Transformation of morals take place before your eyes! You won't have to pound the ethics of proper behavior into men and women, boys and girls who have genuinely encountered Christ, their conduct will be Worthy of the Lord because they have **Ceased from Sin** to Follow Jesus!

Let's Summarize the much debated passages applied toward women to keep them subservient:

Any attempt of the present day Church Systems to disseminate these customs and apply them to their women is futile. They are in an apostate condition preaching another gospel and must first lay the Ax to the root of the problem; 'Sin', in which they have everyone 'Born, Saved and Constant'

As for independent self professed '*holiness*' factions who consider it necessary to argue in favor of ancient customs (with no knowledge of their origins or application in succeeding societies) their efforts are also futile in the sense that if their own wives or other females in their Bible Study groups are **TRULY** submitted to God none of these things need be an issue. They **DO NOT** need to wear head covers, pre-prescribed clothing or keep silent in the fellowship because (if they are really in Christ) their conduct will **ALREADY** be incorruptible and worthy of the Lord.

The Present day condition of the true *Ekklesia* of Christ is a divided (very small) group of men and women, spread world-wide who have come out of the System of error and now are making every attempt to stand aloof of its ever expanding tentacles. They represent the last bastion of God's **TRUTH** remaining on the earth. If we are together to '*Save some*' (from the fire) then we **MUST** (with godly discernment) open our hearts and minds to men and women everywhere who are Seeking to **KNOW** God. Making unreasonable demands on women in particular (to dress a certain way, wear a head covering or remain silent) will only discourage them further from the truth. GET them truly SAVED first and the proper conduct will follow, then they might actually **TEACH** you something!

Dissenters; ask yourselves, have you ever been surrounded by real godly women or married to one on fire for God? Believe they do exist and their holiness is genuine. Expressed **NOT** in adherence to ancient customs but in reverence to Christ.