

From the Spirit  
to the Apostle  
to the believers:

*Concerning Women  
in the Church*

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### *Concerning Women in the Church*

There is a way to find the perfect will of God. And there is a way *not* to find that will. There is a way to know *exactly* what God says and wants. And there is a way to arrive at a network of guesses. Many believers, some even known as “scholars” have fallen into the trap of guesswork, based on culture, history, and semantics. The following comments will be based only on the words given by the Spirit to apostles and prophets.

That royal way of searching is even prescribed in the Scriptures. Psalm 119, for example, says in 176 different ways that the written Word of God is our source. eg, v. 2: *Blessed are those who keep His commandments, who seek Him with the whole heart.* v. 30: *Your judgments have I laid before me.* v. 31: *I cling to Your testimonies.* v. 42: *I trust in Your Word .* v. 75 *I know Lord, that Your judgments are right.* (emphases mine)

Many such sentiments gives the Psalmist. Couple this with the sage words of our beloved apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy, *...the Holy Scriptures...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...* (II Timothy 3:15, 16), and the resultant warning in chapter 4: 1-4 (there is no break in the original document) *... I charge you therefore...Preach the Word!...for the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears...they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned to fables...*

Thus, the “royal way” of which I speak is to see the clear statements of Scripture, and find in that precious Book examples and patterns, written expressly for us through God’s Holy men.

But the “itching ear” gives rise to that other way of “finding the truth”: the statements of and examples and patterns of men. Every cult uses this method, and alas! many of God’s own fall therein.

The process happens something like this: a pastor or leader, quite content with the Scriptures as they are, nevertheless is turned aside from this contentment by a straying member of the flock, a malcontent, one who has seen the Word and decided it is not for all men of all time. This fleshly one has further decided that he personally will not obey this word, and that there must be a clearer interpretation, a more “modern” one that fits “our” time.

The pastor wishes to be loyal to his sheep, but without realizing it becomes disloyal to his Master. If the pastor insists on the pure Word of God, the brother of the itching ear will find another church where his interpretation and practice will be more readily accepted. So Pastor offers to “research” the passage, though he has known for years exactly what it means. He suddenly desires, as Balaam, a second opinion. And lo! Upon “further searching” he discovers that the old truth is just that, old.

He finds “fathers” of the church who have been in favor of the “new” rendering. He discovers that “godly” people from every generation, even his own, have digressed similarly. Certainly these godly ones cannot all be wrong. Of course in the process of his “discovery”, he ignores the words and lives of those who have continued on in the “old” truth, and found it to be sufficient.

The itching ear has been scratched. But no one thought to ask Mr. Disgruntled whence

came his “itch” in the first place. The discernment of the Spirit will reveal that the tendency to want more or less than the prophets have spoken is from the one who appeared in the Garden and spoke to our first parents, *‘Did God REALLY say that? Oh my, he actually MEANT this!’* His lies are oh so convincing. Only a few care to challenge them and cling for dear life to what God has said.

So why is the Church looking for “explanations” of the passages regarding female leadership in the Church? Who is asking that these explanations be made? Are we being betrayed? Are we afraid of political powers that now reign in the world? What is wrong with the Scriptures as they are, and as they have been believed all these many years?

Some may feel the preceding comments and questions to be a bit too harsh a way to introduce the subject at hand, which many believe to be a topic of relative insignificance. I stand with the tone given on the following grounds:

1. *Every Word of God is pure*, Proverbs 30:5. And Jesus, in Matthew 5:19 says that any man who breaks even the least of the commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the Kingdom... God speaks today. The Holy Spirit still quickens His Word to the hearts of man. Whatever He says is pure and holy. Let no one despise even the smallest of the commandments of God. And yes, in dealing with our present topic, we are dealing with commandments, not suggestions, of true prophets and true apostles. Let every mouth be silenced as He speaks.
2. Consider how important this topic is even in the Word. First there are direct statements in Genesis , *she was taken out of man, he shall rule over you*, I Corinthians , *Let your women keep silence, as the law says*, and I Timothy, *I do not allow a woman to teach*. These concepts are backed up by a multitude of examples throughout Scripture.
3. Consider also the great numbers of women affected by this teaching. As the spirit of lawlessness continues to abound , especially in the Western Church, more and more women will be drawn into this restless desire for authority over men.
4. Consider the effects of this teaching on men. A strong woman in a local church will tend to put male leaders in the background. Many of them will not rise up and take their proper place In the secular world , for example, much male unemployment can be attributed to too many females in the job markets.
5. A feminized church cannot model the marriage of Christ and His own. A feminized church cannot picture the Fatherhood of God. Oh God, give us men!
6. Even if this is were a “little truth” (forgive the expression!) , is it not a truism that when “little” lies become embedded in a congregation, it will not be long before bigger ones are at home also?
7. If any reader still believes this to be a “minor” issue, let him hear Isaiah’s lament over backslidden Israel (3:12) *As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.*

Let us now consider the Scriptures. Surely the Lord has not left us without guidance on such a serious matter. Let us go to the beginning of all things. It was here that Jesus sent His

disciples when questions arose about marriage. He sends us here too, for the marriage relationship is at the heart of the matter. To understand marriage is to understand the role of the woman at home. And to be secure in that relationship is to solve the church issue too.

Before sin came into the world God created, first, a man. Then in response to man's need, and out of that man, God created a woman. Woman is from man. Woman was brought to man. Woman was to be a helper for man. That is the Divine order. All else falls short of His glory.

We must remember that this was before the curse. When that curse came, the natural submission of woman to man became law. Now the man was to rule over the woman. She would be at his mercy. It was her enticement that brought man down, so man would bring her down.

Now, in Christ, the curse is done away. Men are to "rule" in love, and women return to natural and holy submission, as before sin came into the world. The error into which women fall in our day is the departing, not only from the days of the curse, but from the very order of creation. This, Paul tells us, cannot be in the true Church.

By the time Paul takes pen in hand to address the issue of female leadership, over 4000 years have passed. But in the great apostle is no desire to remove the ancient landmarks. 2000 years from Paul, we should be similarly steadfast in our resolve to pass to the next generation, unchanging truths.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians contains a number of straightforward commands. *Flee sexual immorality. Flee from idolatry. Earnestly desire the best gifts. Let all things be done decently and in order.* Few would have a problem with any of that. In the midst of all of this command giving (chapter 14) is this command, of equal authority: (verse 34) *Let your women keep silence in the church.* Oops. We have a *serious* problem with that one. That was cultural! That was historical! That was temporary! Oh a multitude of "reasons" are elevated to truth status by those who would excuse the woman teacher, for this is not an age when one wants to confront women's rights!

But Paul's statement stands. In fact, in many translations, including the Greek rendition available in the Parallel New Testament, part b of verse 33 is connected to verse 34, making the statement even stronger: "As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the Church." I am assuming that modern translators found textual evidence to be sufficient for such a rendering.

"Silent" means "silent." "Women" is translated "wives" by some, though the same word is rendered "women" in other passages. Consistency will not allow such random changes. I Timothy 5:2 commands younger "women" (same word) to marry. Try "wives" there! But even if it were "wives", the command is generally disobeyed. And why the word "your" ? The letter is addressed to the church. The "your" refers to that church, not to the men of that church only!

They are not permitted to speak. And permission is denied because of God's original commands in Genesis, not because of some local restraint placed on them by woman-hater Paul. (Such rubbish actually circulates among us!)

In Paul's mind the opposite of female authority is female submission, and he places it here as being a command from God in "the law". In the same chapter (verse 21) he refers to Isaiah 28:1 as the "law". For him it is a broad term that encompasses Genesis to Malachi.

Verse 35 mentions a possible incident that may have given rise to this apostolic injunction, but this does not in any way affect the strong language of verse 34. It is possible that women were shaming their husbands by raising their voices in the assembly and boldly questioning the speakers, ignoring the fact that their own husbands could supply them the knowledge needed. At least this is the gist of the “myth” that has been created to make this verse understandable to us. I am not aware of the historical proof-text from which this story is lifted.

Paul tells them that such action is not called for, that women are to be silent. He settles that Corinthian issue, but in so doing he has settled our issue too, if we will hear him. Silence means no more questions! It follows that this also means, no teaching! If the simple asking of a query is met with such consternation by the man of God, with what spiritual rage would a full-blown lesson be met? Unthinkable!

Keep silent. It is shameful. Is this not clear enough? Much of the New Testament was written to correct a local issue. But for the most part, we do not shrug off the teachings because they were first written to the “early” Christians. We assume the eternity of a Word from God. Why not here?

He goes on to ask, (verse 36, paraphrase) Are you the originators of Scripture? Are you in charge here? Is it to be your feelings and experiences that will dictate the practices of the church of God?

More than that! (verse 37), even if there be among you a “godly” person who basks in his great revelations from Heaven, let him come down out of the clouds long enough to realize that we’re dealing here with the Prophet Moses and the Apostle Paul!

Of course (38), if you’d rather be ignorant, go ahead, but to your own peril.

Those who are convinced that modern woman must have her say in the church, attempt to place Paul against Paul. In the light of Paul’s burning criticism of female practices, they nimbly turn back a few chapters, to 11:4, and point out the phenomenon of the praying and prophesying woman. They say, Here! You see, women DID speak out in the assembly.

It is good for us that Paul himself wrote both of these passages only chapters apart, or men would be pitting Paul against some other church leader. As it is, we need only to harmonize the thoughts of one man, convinced he did not contradict himself.

In the first place, it would be hard to prove that the woman mentioned here is praying or prophesying in a public assembly. The context is again man and woman relationship, and could easily be seen in the area of the home. Philip had 4 virgin daughters that prophesied, probably often. Prophecy was, in the Old Covenant at least, most often an individual, not a group, experience, and could appear anywhere.

It is of note in passing here that persons who come to this passage looking for relief for poor restricted women only find more restrictions on her liberty in the form of the head covering, another taboo topic for Western preachers. We can be assured that this whole matter is just as offensive to modern woman as their required silence, but supporters swoop down and grab half a verse from this head-covering chapter for the sake of a needed proof-text.

Let’s suppose that a woman, in the assembly, using the gift of prophecy, is intended here. What is she doing? She is allowing her vessel to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and from there the Holy Spirit is speaking through her. In no way is she assuming authority given to a man. In no way is she striving to be seen or heard or exalted before the Body of Christ. This we

must allow to explain the presence of the “prophetess” in Scripture. We will cover this matter later when speaking of Deborah.

In his letter to traveling companion and young minister Timothy, Paul gives instructions as to the set-up of the church’s governmental structure. Before stating the qualifications for a man who would be a church overseer or official servant, Paul specifically spells out the role of women, or “wives” if you prefer. (I Timothy 2:9)

He mentions modesty in dress, and good works. Then, consistent with his word to Corinth and God’s Word to Adam and Eve, he demands *silence and submission*. He goes a step further here, the step that is only implied to the Corinthians. A woman is never to 1) teach a man, or 2) have authority over a man. His reasons are not cultural, historical, or temporary. And this is not “wicked Corinth” as some love to explain in his former words to describe the curiously evil people of that town. No, every age is wicked, including, and perhaps especially, our own, as we almost certainly have entered the great apostasy.

Be that as it may, it is *Ephesus* here addressed. And his reasons are theological, Scriptural, and based in the origins of all things.

1. Adam was formed first, creating the natural order.
2. Woman sinned first, bringing that natural order under law.

These words are so painful to the modern ear. This is a “hard saying” to them. But those who embrace hard sayings should allow it to make them hardened soldiers of Christ, and not allow rebellion to spoil the perfecting work of God.

Would this apostle approve of the present set-up of our churches? Would he favor women on the ruling board of a congregation? How about women teaching in an adult Bible class? I think not. May God give us grace to repent of anything that a Spirit-filled apostle would disapprove.

One method used by those perturbed by Paul’s teaching is to find any dear female of Scripture and call them in as witnesses to their point. Well, I believe I know these women too. I want to ask them to testify on the other side for awhile. Let me show you who these women really were, and how far they were from their modern counterparts.

In I Peter 3: 1-6, the apostle mentions how godly women of old trusted in God, stressed inner and not outward beauty, and were submissive to their own husbands. It is these qualities he looks for in their spiritual descendants, the women of the church.

Sarah is lifted up in Scripture as a woman who called her husband “lord” and could therefore see the lordship of God in her spouse. No church leader here!

Rebekkah, having heard God’s Word to her and her husband, favored Jacob, and did what she could to advance him, but never without full submission to her husband.

There were disobedient women too. Dinah wandered off from her father’s covering. Zipporah defied the ways of God in Moses. Miriam spoke against that same Moses and was severely chastised.

The most prominent of Old Covenant women is Deborah. If there is a woman in the Bible that gives any credence to “female leadership” advocates, it is this incredible prophetess. Nevertheless a close examination of what the Bible actually records reveals that the entire extent of her work was the receiving of God’s wisdom miraculously for the people who came to her as she “would sit under the palm tree.” This is how she “judged” the nation, through the

wisdom of God, not the arm of fleshly power.

Here is no exalted elder. Here was a simple handmaiden of the Lord who received His messages and passed them on. She is never seen teaching in an assembly, taking authority over men.

When God called for the deliverance of Israel from its enemy, the prophetess called upon a man to do the work. With Deborah at his side, in respect for the Word of prophecy, the battle was won. The most she claims for herself in all of this is that she was “a mother in Israel.” (Judges 5:7)

So the principle is established in Deborah, not broken: In all visible ways, men must lead the people of God. But this dear woman teaches us that women will be used to receive revelation from God, prophecy, since gender is not a factor when the fullness of God is present. This principle helps us to understand more fully Paul’s seeming “contradiction” in I Corinthians 14. There, women are commanded to be silent for all normal functions of the Church. But when God raises up a woman to speak (chapter 11), when He indeed fulfils the prophecy of Joel to pour His Spirit on His “handmaidens”, and they prophesy the Word of the Lord, or pray empowered by that same Spirit, let not any despise them.

I still contend that this prophecy, as Deborah’s, is outside the assembly, lest woman seem to be exalted in any way.

After Deborah and the judges, the kings rule Israel. No women are seen ruling the Kingdom except in gross disobedience. Jezebel is the domineering wife of Ahab who is obsessed with her own beauty and power. Her daughter Athaliah actually takes over the Kingdom of Judah after killing all but one of the royal heirs. Both of these women died violent deaths for their arrogance.

Oh! The men fared not well either in these days. Evil ruled the land. But the Kingdom had been given to men, was to be carried on by men, and was to culminate eventually in the Man Christ Jesus, Who shall reign forever and ever.

In the life of Jesus Himself, it is only with the most difficult “stretches” that we see any woman, even His mother, raised to “authority” by His command. Women give money to His cause. Women support their apostle husbands. Women tell the story of Jesus to their countrymen. Women praise Him and weep for Him, and women see His resurrected Body and announce such, but no woman rules or teaches any man in all the Gospels.

In the definitive history of our Church, the Book of Acts, one must prove or lose his case when dealing with church “issues.” If one cannot discern even a single female teacher or leader there, it becomes apparent that current female leadership is being driven by another spirit, not God’s.

Roman Catholics want to see Mary elevated in this book. Alas, only one mention of her name, and that in a list with several other disciples.

Then there is Sister Priscilla. 5 times is her name mentioned in the New Testament, 3 in Acts. Always she is seen with her husband. 3 of the 5 times she is mentioned second, 2 times she is mentioned first. It is nearly amusing to see female-authority advocates swoop down on those 2 lone passages as proof positive that women were to have the ascendancy at times.

This blessed couple, Aquila and Priscilla, or if you must, Priscilla and Aquila, were helpers of the Apostle Paul. We see them taking a personal interest in Preacher Apollos, setting

him straight on some issues. We see a church in their home. Of how that church operated and of any other activities of theirs or hers, we have no clue. With this scanty evidence it is not likely we should nominate her for the church board. I am sure Aquila learned from his friend Paul that this is simply not acceptable.

We have run out of history. The godly women of Scripture all submitted to their husbands. The ungodly rebelled and were judged. Women prophesied, but none ruled in Israel or the Church. None were called upon to teach except by Paul who asks older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:4). Women are called to silence in the public assemblies. When they prophesied, it is likely that this was outside the assembly.

Are there no other female voices to be raised? What of sister Phoebe? A total of 2 verses describe all we know of her. In I Corinthians 16:1-2, we learn that she served the church, she needed assistance in that service, she helped many people, and she helped Paul.

To raise this servant of the Lord to church office and leadership is to, once more, ask Paul to contradict Paul! Is it likely that the apostle, having spoken so forcefully about women leading and teaching, would promote a woman who was doing that very thing? Is there not service that is not public, not authoritative?

Was this a widow woman who, like Dorcas served the saints by making clothes for the needy? Was she a woman given to prayer? Was she blessing the orphans of Israel or ministering to the sick? All we know is that she served!

The Greek “diakonos”, a term here applied to Sister Phoebe, is translated *servant, deacon, minister* at various times in Paul’s writings. Paul and Phoebe are both called “diakonos” in Paul’s writings. Servant. Paul was not an “official” deacon. Nor was Phoebe.

Oh how we love to make a big deal about our titles! But in fact every one who serves God IS a minister of God, a servant. Young and old and male and female are servants of God! Ministers. Slaves, if you will. There is no “prominence” attached to this position. It is a lowly office, like the life that Jesus lived. It is washing stinking feet clothed in a towel. It is a call downward, not upward.

Distinct from this general servanthood is the call for men to be “official” servants, deacons, chosen by the church, as were the original 7 of Acts 6. For these men, service was not given as they desired, but as the elders needed. These men could be called upon at any time to do jobs that the elders were too busy to perform. Yes, “deacons” could preach and minister in the miraculous, but their calling was to be “on call.”

And why do I shift to “men” when I speak of these servants? Because all of the originals were men. Because the qualifications for their service involves having a godly wife. The idea of a female being exalted over the church was simply not in the mind of the founding apostles, nor should it be in our mind.

In short, Phoebe, our last applicant for pastor, or teacher, or even deacon, will have to be rejected. You may all step down now.

Is there no other woman then who in some way fits into a leadership role? I look through Paul’s other greetings and find a host of women serving Jesus. Junia is mentioned in Romans 16:7 as kinsmen of Paul and “of note” among the apostles. Does that mean the apostles noted them, or that they were themselves apostles? If Junia were indeed an apostle, it really would be noteworthy, because no other women were given this office. It fits no known pattern of the New Testament. Better to say that these fellow prisoners of Paul were noteworthy. Better

even yet to call them both men, because in many translations “Junia” becomes “Junias.”

No, they just aren’t there. There are MANY women who serve and served Jesus, but in the Sacred Record, none in authority. None. Paul did not allow it. Nor should we.

But wait. Brother John has a word for us. Another great apostle speaks! Actually it is Jesus speaking in Him, and He IS mentioning a woman in a leading position in the local church of her day, in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18 ff) . She is teaching. She obviously has quite a following. She even calls herself a “prophetess” . Yes, her name is Jezebel. The New Testament Jezebel. A wicked woman has arisen and is teaching God’s people to be immoral idolaters.

No, no, I have not just labeled all modern female leaders “Jezebel.” I said that the only woman teacher of God’s people in all the Bible is a wicked woman. I cannot hold up before my readers any good example of a female leader , for there is none.

Here then is I believe, the whole counsel of God on this matter. Women do have specific tasks to perform in the church. They are to stand behind their husbands, serving him as the Lord. They are to pass the faith on to their daughters and grandchildren and other women who need teaching because of a lack of it at home.

But they must keep silent when the church assembles for worship, prayer and the Word of God. Is there a woman in this wicked age who can hear the voice of God and keep this hard word? I believe that a special reward will be hers when the Lord, Who sees all, returns to claim His own.