

PAUL ... and the ministry of women

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(i CORINTHIANS 14: 34, 35; 1 Timothy 2: 11, 12)

It is not possible to understand the commands of Paul concerning the behavior of women in the Church until we consider the circumstances in which these words were uttered. The women of the East are never permitted to sit with their men in a service. Seldom are they permitted even to attend a mosque ; and in Jewish synagogues, places are set apart where they must sit alone. Sometimes a flimsy curtain is all that divides the sexes, and the noisy chatter of uninterested females often disturbs a meeting. In certain places it is still necessary to silence the ladies in the Church. Where women are considered to be little more than slaves, it is necessary that men should propagate the Gospel message. Yet to assert that enlightened women must always be silent is neither in keeping with the Scriptures nor with common sense. Millions of souls, men and women, have been won for Christ through consecrated womanhood.

The Woman Who Prayed-I Samuel 1: 11, 12

The opening chapters of the first book of Samuel provide a thought-provoking contrast. A woman's constancy is seen in bold relief against a background of masculine failure. Most men had miserably failed in those days of national declension, yet one woman took her petitions to the altar of God, and her prayers saved a nation. There is reason to believe that the secret of the success of the Christian Church may be traced to the power of the prayers ascending from the hearts of a great host of Christian women. AH women may emulate the example of their ancient sister.

The Women Who Preached-Acts 21:8, 9

" Philip the evangelist was one of the seven. . . . And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." Philip was an early Church leader, a man upon whom rested the blessing of God. It would seem that his gift had been imparted to his family, for his four daughters followed his example. We are not told where or when they exercised their ministry, but it may be assumed that they also tried to influence Paul in regard to the folly of resisting the Holy Ghost (vv. 11, 12). There is a diversity of gifts in the Church. Some people minister to the Lord in prayer, others minister for the Lord in service. Happy is that Christian, man or woman, who is privileged to tell forth the greatest message in the world. Happy, too, is that father whose influence turns a home into a sanctuary where children are taught to love and preach Christ.

The Woman Who Practised What Others Preached-Acts 9: 36

" Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms which she did." Her gracious spirit and shining example of Christian charity charmed the community and enriched the Church. It was a cause for intense grief when bereavement robbed the fellowship of this outstanding member. We are not told that she preached with her lips ; her hands were more eloquent. She listened to the great expositions given by the leaders of the assembly, and then methodically practised her doctrines. Probably she won much sympathy for the new cause, and the great preachers of her time had increased audiences because of the influence of this delightful woman.

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The Woman Who Praised the Lord-Exodus 15:20, 21

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." That ancient morning was destined to find an imperishable place in history. Israel had been redeemed from bondage ; mercy had triumphed over judgment, and the hearts of the women thrilled with the songs of deliverance. Language was inadequate to express the escaping emotions of these rejoicing hearts, and with glorious abandon they danced for joy. Thus in all ages women have played their part. Some quietly pray while others, specially gifted by God, seek to tell the story of Christ. Some wistfully listen to the preachers, and then with constancy of purpose practise the principles of the faith. It's a far cry from Miriam at the Red Sea to the Salvation Army girl in a city slum ; but God is changeless in all ages. He did, He still does, and He always will, find pleasure in the woman whose affection and talents are placed at His feet.

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