

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." – Ephesians 5:23

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The Role of Women in the Lord's Church

First Corinthians 11:2-16

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Three articles last year detailed the fact that the prohibitions placed on women in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15) are all related to the events in Genesis 1-3. We will not repeat what was written in those articles, except to show how all of these passages teach that their authority for restricting the role of women is grounded in Genesis 1-3. *[If you missed receiving the previous articles you can obtain them by requesting them and sending 55 cents in unused stamps.]*

The Corinthian Church

The apostle Paul established the Corinthian church on his second missionary journey (ca. AD 51-54) and worked with it closely for eighteen months (Acts 18:1-18). After Paul left the area the church in Corinth developed a large number of problems. Paul sought to correct these problems by writing at least two epistles (ca. AD 54-55).

In view of the topic of miraculous spiritual gifts mentioned in the first of these two letters and the continuing practice of many who seek these miraculous gifts today, it is worthy to note that although the Corinthian church had a good number of those who possessed miraculous gifts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12-14), this did not make them a model church nor prevent them from falling into serious religious error, moral and doctrinal. When Paul was informed of these religious problems he did not go back to Corinth and give them more miraculous gifts! Rather, he wrote the two inspired epistles that we have addressed to them, in which he told them what they needed to reform, insisting that what he had written was the **word of God** (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Corinthians 13:10). He also told them that their miraculous powers were temporary in nature and would be superseded by the completed and perfect word of God (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 4:8-16;

2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:25; Jude 3). A proper understanding of the purpose and duration of miraculous spiritual gifts will be helpful in understanding some things relative to the role of women in the Lord's church in First Corinthians.

While First Corinthians 11:2-16 does not specifically mention that the women spoken of as praying and prophesying were miraculously gifted, there is a strong likelihood that they were (Acts 2:17; 21:8-9; 1 Corinthians 14:1-2, 12-15, 26-35). However, even if they were not so gifted, this does not have an adverse effect on what we will teach that this passage means.

What Is the Problem?

Liberal theologians, religious feminists, and many of those crying out for the Lord's church to change claim that our passage in First Corinthians 11:2-16 authorizes women to take leading roles such as praying and prophesying in worship assemblies mixed with both men and women. Religious leaders of this persuasion (denominational and brethren) are working to establish women in leadership in the organization, work, and worship of their churches. Pentecostal groups have long held to this practice and the concept is being increasingly adopted by several Protestant bodies. Those intent on trying to restructure the Lord's church to be like the denominations are pushing equally hard and quite a few congregations are placing women into leadership roles, contrary to what the Scriptures permit. We contend that what these religious friends and brethren are teaching on this is serious error.

The Context of the Passage

In chapters one through six of First Corinthians it is clear that Paul is dealing with some specific problems in Corinth that were revealed to him by "the house of Chloe" (1:10-11). In chapter seven through the end of the letter it appears that Paul answers the questions which the members and leaders of the Corinthian

church had written to him (7:1). Chapters 7-16 may mix these problems and questions at times; it is difficult to say. It is likely that 11:2-16 and 14:34-35 deal with the questions asked by the Corinthians. Of course, these passages reveal the problems involved in these areas too.

Many people have had difficulty in reconciling what Paul says in 11:2-16 regarding women praying and prophesying in some exercise of worship, when this is compared with Paul in 14:34-35, where he tells women to keep silent in the mixed worship assemblies of men and women. The problem can be resolved if these two assemblies are not of the same type. I believe that there is good reason to treat the situation in 11:2-16 as distinct from the obviously mixed worship assembly in 14:34-35.

As previously noted, some women possessed miraculous spiritual gifts in the first century church (Acts 2:17; 21:8-9), but that did not mean that they were permitted to use those gifts in the assemblies for worship where men were present. The occasions of which Paul speaks in 11:2-16 may well have been strictly ladies' Bible classes or Ladies' Day type activities as we have today, only without miraculous manifestations. The situations covered in chapters 7:1 through 11:16 seem to be matters of daily life and conduct, apart from the mixed worship assemblies of the Lord's Day. Even the brief reference to "the Lord's table" (Lord's Supper) in 10:16-17 is given to show one could not partake of the Lord's Table at the worship assembly on the Lord's Day and then eat food offered to idols with idolatrous intentions, either at home or when visiting at another's home (10:21,25-27). Likewise, the main concern discussed in 11:2-16 is God's established hierarchy, not whether it is scriptural for women to pray and prophesy in mixed assemblies for worship.

Paul appears to begin his discussion of problems or questions asked about the Lord's Day assemblies for worship with First Corinthians 11:17-18, saying, "Now in this that I declare unto you *[meaning*

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what follows] I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For **first of all**, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you..." - then Paul goes on to discuss those divisions which had shown themselves in the assemblies for worship on the Lord's Day. These were problems regarding proper observance of the Lord's Supper, corrections of abuses of miraculous spiritual gifts (including women speaking out in the assemblies), preaching on Christ's resurrection and ours, and the collection of money to aid the needy (11:17-16:9).

If 11:2-16 had to do with improper conduct in the Lord's Day assemblies why didn't Paul mention "coming together" until verses 17-18? Why would he say, "For **first of all**," and then begin speaking about problems connected with the Lord's Supper, if really his **first** criticism about their Lord's Day assemblies was the women praying and prophesying in verses 2-16? On the other hand, if the problems connected with women praying and prophesying in these verses were not related to the mixed Lord's Day assemblies, it would make perfect sense for Paul to speak as he did in verses 17-18 and following.

Enduring Principles in**First Corinthians 11:2-16**

What can we learn from the text that helps us deal with similar situations,

and how does this relate to women taking on leadership roles over men in the organization, work, and worship of the Lord's church?

First, Paul teaches a God ordained hierarchy (an order of rank or authority) in which God the Father is Christ's head; Christ is the head of man; and man is the head (authority over) of woman (v. 3). The Greek word (kephale), which is translated "head" in our passage above, means "authority over." This ranking of authority extends even to the Godhead, as shown in verse 3 (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:27-28). Verses 8-9 clearly show that this hierarchy is **not** a matter of custom, but is rooted in the priority of the man in the order of creation and in the purpose of God creating the woman for man, not the reverse (cf. Genesis 2:18-24).

Second, Christian women, whether miraculously gifted or not, could use the talents which they possessed for praying or prophesying in some group settings outside the regular mixed assemblies for worship on the Lord's Day. However, they must always do so in such a way as to give honor to God's established order for man as "the head" over woman.

Third, this honoring of God's established hierarchy includes showing that submission in ways that are customary in one's culture or society, as long as the custom itself does not violate God's law. In first century Corinth that submission was commonly shown by the long hair and veils as symbols of the woman's subordination (vv. 5-10). To act otherwise would bring shame upon the woman, her head, and ultimately Christ and God (vv. 5-6). This would subject the church to unnecessary criticism by society in general, perhaps making it difficult to teach others about Christ. Culture may change, but God's hierarchy must be respected no matter what current culture does or does not approve.

Fourth, to disregard the cultural symbol of submission is a sign of a deeper seated rebellion against God's authority. If God approves of such symbols, as shown by Paul's teaching in 11:2-16, what woman or man dares to ignore God's word on these matters? Rebellion against God's authority caused the angels who so sinned to be cast down and "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). This is the warning Paul gives in 11:10 to the Corinthians. As God's creatures we must accept the place and role He has created for us.

Fifth, men are not to gloat and think themselves as superior to women. While God's hierarchy places women in submission to men, He warns men not to forget that they need women (v. 11). While the "woman is of the man, even so is the man of woman" (v. 12). Every man except Adam has come from woman; a mother. Man is not complete without the woman (Genesis 2:18), and while the wife is to be subject to her husband in everything as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22-24), the husband must, with equal obligation and effort, love his wife as Christ loved the church and as he loves his own body (Ephesians 5:25-28).

Context - Another Possibility

Some may disagree with part of the context of 11:2-16 which I previously set forth, choosing to believe that the situation of the women praying and prophesying in this passage must have reference to the regular mixed assemblies of the church for worship on the Lord's Day. Some contend that Paul in 11:2-16 simply deals with God's hierarchy and the need to observe the cultural symbols of that situation, waiting until he dealt with the use of miraculous spiritual gifts in chapter 14 to condemn the practice of women speaking out in leading roles in mixed worship assemblies (14:34-35). There is something to be said for Paul not dealing with all the possibilities connected with a topic in one section of Scripture. He speaks of eating meats offered to idols in chapters 8 and 10, interrupting that topic with a defense of his apostleship in chapter 9. He also briefly mentions the Lord's Supper (table) in chapter 10:16-17, but waits until 11:17-34 to present more detail about its proper observance. So, he could have referred to women speaking in mixed assemblies in 11:2-16, but waited until 14:34-35 to correct the unauthorized practice. Some who hold to this possibility think that this "skipping around" is understandable if Paul was going in order down a list of questions that the Corinthians had asked him (cf. 7:1).

While this is a possible contextual setting for the differences between 11:2-16 and 14:34-35, I do not think that it is as attractive as what we have previously stated.

Conclusion

First Corinthians 11:2-16 is **not** a passage that authorizes women to take or accept leadership roles in the mixed assemblies for worship nor in the organization and work of the Lord's church.

God's hierarchy with Him as head over all, with Christ the head of man and man the head of woman is here clearly established as God's law (vv. 3, 8-10). This hierarchy is not cultural, but the symbols which illustrate this submission may change. The symbols in first century Corinth were long hair and veils. It may be different in other cultures.

Women may exercise their spiritual talents in a number of ways that do not conflict with the restrictions which God has set forth. A ladies only assembly for Bible study, special Ladies' Day activities, teaching children's Bible classes, or private Bible studies are possible settings where they may do so (Hebrews 5:12-14; Titus 2:3-5; Acts 18:24-26).

This passage rejects the cries of the liberals, feminists, and change agents of our day who are rebelling against the God ordained authority of man as the head of woman, as Christ is the head of man and God the head of Christ. *[Our next article on this topic will be in June, looking at First Corinthians 14:34-35.]*

Second Corinthians 6:14-18 On Fellowship

by Max Patterson

In this text there is an imperative not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Then, there is a discussion of why Christians cannot have fellowship with unbelievers by using five different Greek words for fellowship and contrasting them with some element of the unbeliever. Finally, there is a call to come out from among the unbelievers.

First, let us look at the words for fellowship.

√ The first word translated **fellowship** also means a sharing, participation, and communion.

√ The second word translated **communion** means fellowship, intimacy, joint participation, sharing (This is the most commonly used word for fellowship in the N.T., occurring some 19 times).

√ The third word translated **concord** also means agreement (This word literally means to sound with, therefore, harmony or accord. The Greek word is transliterated symphony in English).

√ The fourth word is translated **part** and also means portion, or share.

√ The fifth word is translated **agreement**

and means union, approval, assent.

These words show a close relationship. In many ways these five words are simply synonymous. They show conclusively and completely the utter folly of having fellowship with unbelievers.

What does it mean to be unequally yoked? This word is composed of two words: One, "Other, not simply numerically, but qualitatively, hence, a different kind." Two, "Yoke." Thus, the meaning "Other yoked." How can we apply this today? There seems to be many categories to which this could be applied:

- Some marriages. Although I do not believe this relates to marriages as such, there is no question in my mind that there are some marriages that come under this command. Particularly where the unbeliever will not allow the Christian to practice Christianity unimpeded.

- Some business agreements or arrangements. Particularly those relationships where the unbeliever wants to practice unethical and sinful behavior, and the Christian cannot partake.

- One of the best applications to be made of this passage are the alliances that are made in a religious sense. For example, the local ministerial alliance, or business men's fellowship or inter-church fellowships. Some to whom Paul wrote inclined to associate with pagans in a social way in their idolatrous feasts. Christianity and idolatry are simply incompatible. Christians need to stay away from any false teacher, or teaching, when such relationships might identify the Christian with infidelity and falsehood. We can have no part with anything or anybody that opposes the truth; in any sense where it might be confusing, or maybe misunderstood, whether we are partakers in those false things or not.

Paul's solution was to come out from among them and be separate. Sound teaching! It needs to be taken in a day when we have some of our own brethren flirting with denominations with all of their false doctrines.

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[Sadly, some have now gone beyond flirting and are practicing full blown spiritual adultery. Like Israel of old, they are neither ashamed nor do they blush at such sins (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12) - Ed.]

Never again will I admit lack, for "God hath shall supply all my needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19).

Counterfeit, Substituted Religion

by Joe W. Nichols

When something is not what it ought to be; when it does not meet the test of genuineness, it should fail. Consumers "back-off" quickly from weakened, watered-down, unreliable products.

Shouldn't we react the same and more so in spiritual matters? Shouldn't we expect a church of Christ to be just that, a church of Christ, biblical in every respect; organization, plan of salvation, worship and work? When such is not the case, shouldn't we demand that correctness be restored, and if not, "back-off" from it and no longer give it our consideration and support? Personally, I have no fondness for the counterfeit, the watered-down, or substitutes; I like the "real thing." Should I be any different in my religion wherein my eternal destiny is determined?

Hosea, the prophet, tells us concerning Epharaim (representing the ten tribes of Israel to the North), "Epharaim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment: **because he was content to walk after man's command**" (Hosea 5:11). We

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have in the world today **two choices** in Christian religion: (1) What God designed and built through Jesus Christ His Son and the apostles; (2) What man has designed and built himself: similar, but counterfeit. In viewing denominations (now numbering above 400), their churches have a marked-beginning accredited to some man on a certain date many years after Christ established His church. Also, these denominational churches are organized differently from the New Testament church. In their plan of salvation, passive experience is **substituted for obedience to the Gospel** (baptism is nullified). Their worship is full of innovations and they cast aside the work of the church for social functions.

When we are content to walk after "man's commands," whether written in human church manuals and disciplines, or pressed upon us by some liberal preacher, we can expect to be "oppressed" and ultimately to be "crushed in judgment."

God designed the church through Jesus Christ His Son to be the congregation of the saved. We must take the pattern found in the New Testament (II Tim. 1:13; I Tim. 6:3) and carefully "mark-it-out" and duplicate it. It must be followed explicitly in faith and practice. "Watered-down" is unacceptable! "Whosoever goeth onward and **abideth not** in the doctrine of Christ, **hath not God...**" (II John 9).

Hosea later said of Epharaim (representing God's people), "he mixed himself among the people" (Hosea 7:8). As evident, the identity of God's people was being lost, no longer to be recognized as God's "peculiar people." Because of this, the prophet announced, "They shall not dwell in Jehovah's land" (Hosea 9:3).

Two good lessons can be learned from Hosea's statements about Israel: (1) God does not allow in religion the substituted, the counterfeit, that which is after man's command; (2) when God's people mingle themselves with people who embrace religious innovations and take up their practices, they soon lose their God-given identity, become oppressed, are crushed in judgment, and shall not dwell in "God's land."

Man was lost without God, unable to save himself (I Cor. 1:21) and without hope. God, as a loving God full of grace and mercy, devised a plan involving His only begotten Son and the church that He would build to save mankind. We

are foolish to think that we can improve upon God's plan and even more foolish to become involved in a counterfeit or substitution.

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PARENTING

For a parent to require a child to wash his face and keep his body clean and not require it to learn and obey the Bible, is to teach it that the body is worth more than the soul, cleanliness of body is worth more than a pure heart and a clean and holy spirit.

For a parent to require a child to learn spelling and reading and not require it to study the Bible is to teach it, by a forcible object lesson, that it is much more important to be qualified to live in this world than to be fitted to live in heaven.

There is no evading this simple truth. The parent that so treats and impresses his child is the worst enemy that the child has. He will be made to feel this when he meets that child at the judgment of God. It is better to face the question honestly now. *-David Lipscomb*

CHRISTIANS

"They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them. They love one another. They rescue the orphan from violence. They do not refuse to help widows. He who has, gives, ungrudgingly, to him who lacks. If they see a stranger, they take him home and entertain him as a brother. When one of their poor passes from the world, any one of them who sees it provides for his burial according to his ability. And, if they hear about one of their number being in prison or being oppressed for the name of the Messiah, all of them provide for his needs. Thus they labor to become righteous as those who expect to see their Messiah, and to receive from Him the glorious fulfillment of the promise made to them. Truly, this is a New People, and there is something divine in them."

*Written to the Emperor Hadrian
117-138 A.D., just a few years
after the death of the Apostle John.*



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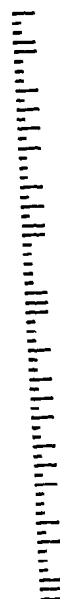
GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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