

Fulton County Gospel News

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"...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 Timothy 2:11-15

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth and final lesson in this series which began in October of 1996. A busy schedule and other problems have caused the unwanted delays. These lessons have been well received and I am thankful for your encouragement.

Our text comes from the first of two letters the apostle Paul penned to his son in the faith, Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philipians 2:19-22). Likely it was written soon after Paul's release from prison in Rome, ca. AD 62. Paul admonished Timothy to warn false teachers (1:3), and to "wage the good warfare" (1:18, NKJV), remembering that there are those who can make "shipwreck" of the faith (1:19-20).

In chapters two and three Paul deals with matters pertaining to one's conduct "in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (3:14-15). Among those concerns for how one is to behave in the church is the role of women (2:9-15). In particular, Paul addresses the manner in which women were to adorn themselves (2:9-10), and he reminds Timothy of the need for the women to demonstrate a submissive character in relation to the men (2:11-15).

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

I am amazed at the boldness with which some supposedly religious people simply dismiss what the **apostle** Paul says here about the role of women. After mentioning God's desire for all people to be saved through the knowledge of Christ, Paul names Jesus as the one who gave Himself in our place and stands as Mediator between God and man. Concerning these things, Paul was to testify as an apostle. He states:

"for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle - I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying - a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Timothy 2:7, NKJV).

The point is that what Paul is writing he is writing as an apostle, appointed by the

Lord to teach and preach! [See also 1 Corinthians 14:34-37.] What he is speaking in this epistle is *"the truth in Christ"* (1 Timothy 2:7).

The *"Therefore"* of verse 8 and what follows is directly related to his claim to be speaking the truth as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He speaks with the authority of Christ when he says, *"Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"* (2:8, NKJV). The Greek word for "men" (aner) in this verse is a word that specifies males only, and thus authorizes only males to do what Paul commands. In the context of how to behave in God's house (church), this verse authorizes only men to lead in prayer *"everywhere."* We know that women are to worship (John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17); and that women prayed in certain situations (1 Corinthians 11:5, 13).¹ Therefore, what Paul teaches in this passage must mean that the men have the God-given responsibility of leading in the offering of prayers whenever there is a gender mixed assembly (both men and women).

Verse 9 says, *"In like manner also,"* as Paul begins to discuss matters pertaining to how women are to behave in the church. The **same apostolic authority** that specified what the men are to do is now directed at the conduct of the women. Here is where many are trying to change what Paul wrote as an apostle of Christ. How dare anyone come along and presume to explain away what Paul says is *"speaking the truth in Christ"?!*

REGULATION OF THE WOMAN'S ROLE

Space prohibits an extended consideration of the modesty with which women are to adorn themselves, but the contrast Paul gives is that while men are to lead in prayer with *"holy hands,"* women are to adorn themselves with *"modesty [and] good works"* (2:9-10; cf. 1 Peter 3:1-7). The common thread is holiness and purity for both men and women. What the

women "show" is not to be **flash, form, nor flesh;** but modesty, godliness, and good works (cf. Matthew 5:16).

Further instructions on how female behavior is to relate to men in the church follows in First Timothy 2:11-12. Some religious feminists and "change agents" in the Lord's church have said that Paul's comments here were intended to be temporary and local, attempting to regulate some disorderly women in the Ephesian congregation. There is no indication for such an assumption anywhere in this letter. The attempts to manufacture evidence for it would be comical, if it were not such a blatant disregard of apostolic authority. There is no definite article before the word "women" in the Greek text, which would be expected if a particular group of women were being considered. These are women in general, all women, who are being regulated by Paul, the apostle of Christ. Were just **some** women supposed to dress modestly and behave with godliness and good works, or all women? Obviously, all. Just so, all women were to honor the following restrictions revealed by Christ through Paul.

Women were to "learn," but "in silence" (2:11). The word for "silence" in this verse is different from the one used in First Corinthians 14:34-35, but the principle is the same. In Corinthians, Paul was showing that man had been given the leading role in guiding the worship of the church. Women were to be "silent" in 14:34, just as the "tongues speaker" was to "keep silent" when there was no interpreter (14:28), and the prophet was to "hold his peace" (keep silent, NKJV) when another prophet received a revelation (14:30). In First Corinthians 14:34 women were to "keep silence," not because others wanted to speak, but because *"it is not permitted unto them to speak!"* The Corinthian word for "keep silent" is a strong word which means not to utter a sound. In Timothy, Paul used a different word that **can** mean "peaceable quietness." In view of that possibility, some are saying this is proof that Paul was writing to merely correct disorderly women in Ephesus and not giving restrictions to all women. One language

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

scholar did an exhaustive study of the Greek word Paul uses in Timothy for silence (*hesuchia*), particularly as it was used in the prepositional phrase "in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). He concluded:

That **silence from sound** is an undisputed meaning of *Hesuchia* [silence], plus the parallels to the prepositional phrase *en hesuchia* [in silence], which we have cited, creates a presupposition that that is its proper meaning in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12. I would be glad to see a linguistic demonstration to the contrary... The evidence shows that the translation tradition from the time of Jerome has been almost unanimous that **1 Timothy 2:11, 12 is dealing with silence (the absence of sound) and not merely with a peaceable disposition and behavior**² [bold emphasis mine, TJC].

Verse 11 is amplified further by verse 12. The New King James Version presents a clearer translation of verse 12 than the older King James. Paul says, "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." [The King James word "suffer" in this verse means "permit," and the phrase "usurp authority" has frequently been misunderstood.] Paul here prohibits two related things regarding male/female relationships. The woman is not to **teach** "over a man,"

nor to **have authority** "over a man."

Women are to teach (1 Timothy 5:14; 2 Timothy 1:5; Titus 2:3-5), but not in any authoritative position "over a man." Neither is she to "have authority over a man" in any sense which would violate these Scriptures. Some have contended that the KJV's wording of "usurp authority" simply means that a woman cannot "take authority" over a man, but if she is given that authority by men then she could exercise such authority. However, as noted earlier, the better translation of that Greek word (*authentein*) is "to have authority." God did not give the woman that authority, so she cannot "have" it, no matter what man or group of men say otherwise! The American Standard Version and the New King James Version both translate "have authority" in verse 12. What Paul speaks of here is authority women cannot have; that is, to teach or exercise authority over men in the church.

THE EXTENT OF THE REGULATION

To what extent do these restrictions God placed on women apply? We know that women prayed and prophesied (taught) in some situations (Acts 18:26; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5, 13; Titus 2:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:5 et al.), but the total context of all passages pertaining to the woman's role in the church shows that they did not take leading roles in praying or teaching over the men in any of the gender mixed assemblies of the church.

We also know that the woman's role of submission extends to the family relationship, as Paul illustrated by teaching on the duties of the wife toward her husband in Ephesians 5:22-32. [Husbands must also remember their duties to their wives in this passage.]

Also, the passage in First Corinthians 11:1-12 shows a general hierarchy of man as head (authority) over the woman. First Timothy 2:11-15 is also capable of being understood as a general status existing between the sexes, in view of the reasons stated for the restrictions. Some have stated that they believe that the restrictions in First Timothy have "no limitations as to time, place, and custom. It deals with women's position in relation to men."³ Another states, "Paul makes it clear that the principle stressed is applicable at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances. At no time, in no place, and in no circumstances is the woman to place herself (or allow herself to be placed) in a

position in which she would be exercising dominion over a man."⁴

If this principle extends into the business world, worldly governments, and worldly social settings, many Christians will have to radically change their attitudes and actions. It is not at all clear to me that these prohibitions apply to situations which are strictly worldly. However, I must confess that I have not given a sufficient amount of thought to this possible application and cannot give a complete answer on this point. However, we have made it clear that the principle of the woman's submissive role does extend into the areas of the family and the Lord's church. That much is certain from the Scriptures studied.

WHY PAUL GAVE THESE LIMITATIONS

Radical feminists who care nothing about the Bible portray it as mythical or call the apostle Paul a crotchety old bachelor who had it in for women. One cannot reason with such people. Others, who claim to be believers, but want to permit expanded roles for women in the church, will try to **limit** Paul's instructions to a specific cultural situation which they say existed in first century Ephesus when Paul wrote, but has **no application** to women in the church in general. In this passage (1 Timothy 2:11-15), we have shown that there was no one specific group singled out by the apostle. He was speaking to all women.

While we dealt with the reasons Paul placed these prohibitions on women in earlier lessons ("The Genesis Connection and the Role of Women in the Lord's Church," FCGN, Nov. and Dec., 1996), we will here make some brief comments. The first reason given for the restrictions on women is the order of creation, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (2:13, NKJV). This certainly cannot be said to deal with just a local, temporary cultural situation or with a grumpy old man. This goes all the way back to the sixth day of creation and makes a fundamental argument for the headship of man over the woman - "Adam was formed **first**, then Eve" (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). This explains a basic concept of God's intended relationship between man and woman.

The second reason stated is that when Eve acted in a leadership role in Genesis 3, taking the forbidden fruit, eating it, and then coaxing Adam to eat it, she showed flagrant disregard for the God-ordained headship role of her husband

and assumed it for herself (2:14). God had established the headship of the man, not Adam! Eve's role of submission did not come as a result of the Fall (into sin). That had been the result of God creating Adam first and then making Eve for the man. [See "The Genesis Connection..." articles mentioned above.]

In spite of the woman's sin and the limitations in her relationship with man which God established, if any woman accepts this general role God has given to her and loves and serves Him, "she will be saved" (2:15). The word "childbearing" in this verse is likely a figure of speech where a part of something stands for the whole, a synecdoche. "Childbearing" stood for the whole general purpose of the woman's physical life. She was a wife to her husband, by whom she bore their children, thus being both wife and mother. These are God's gifts to a woman which give her life purpose and meaning (cf. Genesis 1:28; 2:23-24). **How sad today that being a married lifetime companion of a man and bearing and raising children is looked upon with great contempt by so many women!** Consider also how the concept of abortion runs so violently contrary to God's intention for His woman. But there is more for the woman to consider; more than being a wife and mother. She must have the continuing spiritual qualities of "faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (2:15, NKJV). Only with these fruits of the Spirit will the woman fully be what God intended her to be (cf. Galatians 5:22-25). With these attributes she will be a beautiful woman, confident of her place in God's scheme of things. She will have no desire to seek roles outside of God's established order. She will be satisfied in knowing that she shares an equal salvation with man now (Galatians 3:26-29), and that God's way is always the right way. She realizes that the restrictions God placed on her relationship with man do not make her less important, nor inferior. She just has different roles and responsibilities, but they are God given!

CONCLUSION

While these six articles have sought to provide crucial answers from God's Word regarding the male/female relationships, some things may have been said that raised other questions. Still, I am confident that we have presented a fairly complete and accurate picture of the role of women in the Lord's church.

The Scriptures, when considered in their totality, do not authorize women to take

or to have leading roles in teaching or having authority over men. There is no authority for women serving as preachers or elders to the church. The idea of expanding women's role into other areas of leadership in organization or worship of the church is equally without authority. Elders, preachers and any other church leaders cannot give women the authority to do these things without violating the teaching of First Timothy 2:11-15 and the other passages considered in these six articles.

[Previous articles discussed Genesis 1-3; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; and 14:34-35. If you would like a copy of all six articles, you may send a legal size, self-addressed, stamped envelope with \$.78 postage. Mail your request and stamped envelope to the address in the information box of this paper. You may copy these articles (or any articles in FCGN) for free distribution, as long as you give credit to the publication and author. - Editor]

¹ See the previous article, "The Role of Women in the Lord's Church: First Corinthians 11:2-16," *Fulton County Gospel News*, March 1997, which deals with whether or not the women were praying and prophesying in Corinth in their regular assemblies and approved by Paul.

² Jack P. Lewis, "Quietness or Silence," in *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 130, No.7: July 1988, 11-12.

³ Jack P. Lewis, *Leadership Questions Confronting the Church* (Nashville: Christian Communications 1985), 5.

⁴ Roy Deaver, "Woman and Prayer," in *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (July 1975), 13-15.

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HEAVEN-CENTERED THINKING

by B.J. Clarke

Oh, how we need more heaven-centered minds! Many have forgotten that this world is not our home and that we're just passing through. Carnal-mindedness is rampaging across our land and it has even filtered into the Lord's body. So many are so wrapped up in the cares and affairs of this life that they have made little or no preparation for the next life.

The Holy Scriptures constantly emphasize the need for heaven-centered thinking and living. Paul said, "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col.3:1, 2). The Colossians needed to revamp their thinking to be more heaven-centered rather than earth-centered. A similar admonition fell from the lips of our Lord in his Mount Olivet discourse, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also: (Matt. 6:19-21).

In spite of the plain declaration of the preceding passages, a mad dash to accumulate earthly treasures has relegated laying up heavenly treasures to a place of secondary importance. When will we ever realize the futility of setting our affections upon a place that is temporal in nature? Peter reminded his readers of the certainty of Christ's coming and the attendant consequences. When the day of the Lord comes, the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all of its works will be burned up (2 Peter. 3:10). Peter then asked a question that we would do well to soberly examine. He said, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness...? (2 Peter 3:11). In other words, since the earth and all within it is going to someday be annihilated, should you be earth-centered or heaven-centered in your thinking?

Oh, how we need to emulate and imitate the heaven-centered thinking of the heroes of faith chronicled in Hebrews 11. They confessed that they were strangers and

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

pilgrims on the earth (Heb.11:13). They desired a better country, that is, a heavenly country (Heb.11:16). They realized that here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come (Heb.13:14). Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). It was heaven-centered thinking that prompted Moses to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). Heaven-centered thinking explains why some were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35ff).

Likewise, heaven-centered thinking will enable us to remember to love not the world neither the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15). Let us never forget that the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 John 2:17).

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PREMILLENNIALISM

by Dennis Gullledge

As we approach a new millennium in less than five years, the public is being bombarded with doomsday prophecies from those who are certain Christ's return is imminent. Many people, because the year 2000 is near, feel that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world are also near - as near as the millennium itself. A recent U.S. News & World Report poll suggests that millenarian views are not limited to the "religious fringe," and that 60% of Americans think the world will end sometime in the future, and more than 61% believe that Christ will return to earth. Such millennial fervor is not new. Story has it that at the stroke of midnight on January 1, 1000, the whole country of Iceland converted to Christianity out of pure apocalyptic anxiety.

The doctrine of premillennialism takes its name from the Latin millennium, meaning "thousand years," and *prae*, meaning "before." Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., once defined it as follows: "'Pre' means 'before,' 'millennium' means 'one thousand,' and, 'ism' means it ain't so." The word premillennium is not found in Scripture, neither is the doctrine it represents, but the English equivalent to its Latin parent term is found five times in Revelation 20:1-6. If one will read that

passage he will know all there is to know about the millennium. This text is made to teach that Christ will return to raise the righteous dead ("Rapture"). God will regather Israel into Palestine for a "national conversion" of Jews to Christianity. This will be followed by a period of "tribulation" (seven years of trouble on earth). Christ will return again, with his saints to judge the nations. The battle of Armageddon will be fought and won by forces of righteousness. Satan will be bound for a thousand years. Christ will have one thousand years of reign and glory on earth, then will follow the resurrection, judgment of the wicked and eternity. So goes the pseudo-theory.

The basic problem of millennialism of whatever stripe is that it takes a false view of the Kingdom of God. It is the same distorted view of a physical Kingdom which the Jews held in Jesus' day. The view teaches that Christ failed to establish his Kingdom at his first advent (what guarantee is there that he will successfully establish it the second time?). The church is viewed as nothing more than a substitute until Jesus can establish the Kingdom. Premillennialism is a complete rejection of the truth regarding the Lord's Kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19; Luke 9:27; John 3:3-5; Colossians 1:13).

What harm is there in premillennialism? It is erroneous in that it repudiates many fundamental Bible truths and offers a false hope of Jewish decent in the promise of restoring national Israel. The real people of God are Jews inwardly, not outwardly (Romans 2:28-29).

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A certain amount of friction between the generations is inevitable. That's because the young and the old have all the answers and those in between are stuck with the questions.

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The reason parents no longer lead their children in the right direction is because the parents aren't going that way themselves.

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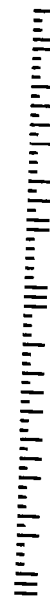


GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- 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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