

WOMEN' S WORK IN BAPTIST CHURCHES

By: H. Boyce Taylor, Sr.

PROHIBITIONS ON WOMEN TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC IN MIXED RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Corinthians 14:34-35). This prohibition goes even to the extent that they are forbidden to speak out from the audience and ask questions.

TO LEAD IN PUBLIC PRAYER IN A MIXED ASSEMBLY

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (I Timothy 2:8-9).

TO TEACH MEN

"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." (I Timothy 2:12) This prohibition limits the work of women in Sunday School to teaching women and children. There is plenty of work for them to do there without getting out of their places and teaching men's classes. It is significant that nearly all Sunday School experts today are saying that the teaching of men and boys above the Intermediate Department is a man's job. God said so a long time ago.

TO BE IN AUTHORITY OVER A MAN

"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Timothy 2:12). Women are prohibited from having any place in the work of our churches that puts them in authority over their brethren. So important is this that Paul says that whenever a woman comes into a church assembly she ought to have a veil or covering of some kind on her head as a sign that she is under authority, not in authority. *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."* (I Corinthians 11:3-10) . The flagrant violation of this prohibition by evangelists and evangelistic singers and the woman who prefer to obey them rather than God, is one of the many ways now prevalent in which the authority of God's Word is being broken down. These are prohibitions which God the Holy Spirit put upon our sisters.

HER COMPENSATIONS

We mention two:

HER CHILD-BEARING

"Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." (I Timothy 2:15). As Dr. B. H. Carroll well said: "The woman shall live, indirectly, in the children she bears if they (the children) prove to be worthy. The man lives or dies according to his rule and leadership in public affairs; the woman lives or dies in her children. His sphere is the public arena. Her sphere, the home. Washington's mother lived in him; Lois and Eunice lived in Timothy. The Roman matron, Cornelia, pointed to her boys, the Gracchi, and said, "These are my jewels."

"The world is better and brighter when women sanctify and beautify the home, proudly saying, 'My husband is my glory, my children are my jewels and I am content to live in them. Why should I desire to be a man and fill his place: who then will fill mine?'"

HER HOSPITALITY AND SERVICE

"He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:40-42). The Lord Jesus Himself shows that those who receive God's prophets and ministers to them and to His needy little ones will get as much reward as the prophets do to whom they minister. In other words the Master said that women, upon whom these tasks preeminently fall, will get just as much reward for their private work faithfully done, as the men will for their public work, faithfully performed. The women who speak in public, like the folks who give and pray and fast to be seen of men, get their reward here in what men say about it.

WOMAN'S SPHERE AND WORK

While on this question it is well to give what the Scriptures have to say on the positive side of the question as well as on the negative side. There has been the weakness of much of the discussion of Paul's prohibitions. The women have been told what they were not to do; but when with earnest sincerity, they came and asked what God wanted them to do they have oft times been put off with no definite answer. Now God's word is just as clear and plain on what women ought to do as it is on what they ought not to do.

We believe a careful reading of some of the things that God has commanded women to do will show that the most neglected work in the world is woman's work. Just to the extent that woman becomes man's competitor in doing a man's work, just to that extent her own work goes undone. Because so many women are trying to be men and fill men's places, today women's work is the most neglected, the most slighted and the most needed work in all the world.

WHAT IS WOMAN'S SPHERE AND WORK?

THE HOME

Women should above all else be homebodies. Woman was made to be man's help meet. *"And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (Genesis 2:18). *"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth*

her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates" (Proverbs 31:10-31). The "virtuous" woman was a worker at home.

Paul enjoined Timothy, the young preacher, to teach the women to be, not idlers or tattlers or busy-bodies, but, "keepers at home." *"And withal they (women) learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Timothy 5:13-14).* Peter also had somewhat to say along the same line, *"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."* (1 Peter 3:16).

The divorce court, the apartment house and the modern club are menaces today that threaten the sanctity and happiness and continuity of our American homes, because many women are not willing to be and to do the things necessary to make their homes little paradises of love and of God. The woman who neglects her home life to do any kind of public work, religious or otherwise, is not occupying her God-appointed sphere or doing her God-given task. Her husband is a stranger among men, wandering around lodges and hotel lobbies and other loafing places at night to find the companionship and love that he ought to find at home; and her children are a menace to the public weal and moral welfare of the community in which she lives. The home life is one of the most neglected spheres of woman's work, for no house ever was or ever can be a home without a woman to "guide the house." Paul enjoined that only women should be put on the list of those to be supported by the church: *"Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."* (1 Timothy 5:9-10), who were too old to be mothers and whose homes had been broken up by their being made widows and their children already "brought up." Therein is a striking example of

the "consistency of the Bible on woman's work." God never calls women to neglect their homes or their husbands or their children to do any kind of public work.

MOTHERHOOD

Paul enjoins "*Younger women to marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion of the adversary to speak reproachfully.*" (I Timothy 5:14)

Billy Sunday told only the other day in an address to the women of Kansas City of how two physicians had told him recently of six and twelve women respectively in his choirs and engaged in other religious work in other cities where he had been, who had come to them and asked them to "prostitute their manhood" and sin against God and their husbands and homes and their unborn progeny be "relieving them of the cares of motherhood." Some doctor was found who was criminal enough to do what they asked, for none of them have had babies since. Just that thing is giving the adversary occasion to speak reproachfully of many women in many churches.

TEACH WOMEN

God's Word prohibits women from teaching men, "*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*" (I Timothy 2:12). God's Word equally as clearly enjoins women to teach women. "*The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed*" (Titus 2:3-5). The reason so many young women are ensnared in the meshes of the white-slavers today is because they have not been taught. The reason so many girls are decoyed into the disgraceful, licentious modern dance is because mothers and other women teachers are too busy trying to do the men's work to take time to teach their daughters modesty and decency and chastity. The reason of the popularity of the "movies" with their unlimited temptation under the most favorable surroundings for too much freedom between the sexes is because the women are neglecting to teach their daughters the sacredness of their own person and the necessity of making boys "hands off" for the preservation of their own chastity. The shameless exposure of their person, by wearing dresses too low at the top and too high at the bottom and by having on too few clothes, so prevalent among many women, is a sad commentary on the woeful neglect of older women to teach younger women how to dress "becomingly and chastely."

HOSPITALITY, SERVICE, SACRIFICE

"Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" (1 Timothy 5:10) . In this passage Paul outlines women's work as four-fold:

(1) HOME - "Bringing up children.,,

(2) HOSPITALITY - "Entertaining strangers."

(3) SERVICE - "Washing the saints' feet."

(4) SACRIFICIAL GIVING OF - Time, labor, or money to *"relieve the afflicted"* and other good works.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing" (Mark 12:42). "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat" (Matthew 26:7). These two women are fine examples of sacrificial giving. "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36). "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul ... And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed" (Acts 16:14,40). "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." (Acts 18:26). "Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee ... And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son" (I Kings 17:9,13). These woman are marvelous examples of keeping open house for the Lord's servants. Women have their hands full if they follow out Paul's program as outlined above. Paul was as specific in telling women what they ought to do as he was in telling them what they ought not to do. Just to the extent that they violate his prohibitions they neglect the God-ordained tasks enjoined. If they do the men's work the men will lie down on the job and let them, and their own work will go undone. The men will not do it for them. If they attend to their own work the men will do theirs when they see they have to do it.

Printed by:

Bryan Station Baptist Church

3175 Briar Hill Road

Lexington, Ky 40516

1,000 Copies November 1997