

## Lecture 1 Paul, Women, and Ancient Culture

### Introduction:

I want you to look at the following two verses:

#### **1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NASB)**

- 34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.
- 35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

#### **1 Tim 2:11-12 (NASB)**

- 11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.
- 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

Now, I want you to answer the following question, “Does the Apostle Paul have a high or low view of women and their spiritual positions?”

If all that you have to read is these two verses, divorced of their context, then you will most likely conclude that Paul was either anti-woman or at least overtly, pro-man.

While you might conclude this from these two verses alone, if they were put into their context, we would learn that Paul held a high view of women and their role in local church ministry.

### **The Predominate Ancient Perspectives on Women**

- The Greeks held a very low view of women.
  - In the Iliad, women were the cause of all conflict and suffering.
  - “Homer showed women in the narrow confines in which everyone of his world believed they should be kept—in the home, restricted to certain acceptable tasks, subordinate to men. Nowhere did he tell of a woman with a separate identity. A woman was always “the daughter of,” or “the wife of,” or “the concubine of...”<sup>1</sup>
  - Greek gods regularly beat their wives and cheated on them.
  - In Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Greek Creation account), men pre-existed women and lived in peace. Evil came when women arrived.
  - Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates each accused women of having poor character.
  - The Greek dramas, women were often viewed as hopeless ignorant and sensual. They always were doomed to failure.
  - Men regularly married women for political or financial reasons while keeping concubines or mistresses for personal pleasure or love.

---

<sup>1</sup> Why Not Women, 1066.

- Question: Is this where Paul got his view of women?
- The Romans held an equally low view of women.
  - Many of the Roman goddesses functioned like prostitutes, complainers, or sexual deviants.
  - While some marriages fared better than their Greek predecessors, most were political or economically driven. Many men were not faithful husbands.
  - Roman men proudly boasted of cheating on their wives and even their mistresses.
  - Male Roman citizens were given 3 names but the females from the same families were only given one name.
  - The Romans worshipped their ancestors from their father's lineage but rarely their mothers.
  - Roman women often underwent crude and deathly abortions. Others were often forced to abandon their infants in trash heaps or give them over into slavery.
  - Roman husbands could not only divorce their wives but they also could kill them for adultery or drunkenness.
  - Female children were exposed (left to die) or sold into slavery far more often than male children.
  - Female slaves were generally the property of their owners and underwent frequent and sometime violent sexual abuse.

### **Paul's Perspective on Women**

- Paul ministered in a woman's home. Lydia
- Paul assumed in 1 Tim. 2:9-10 that a woman had a rightful claim to godliness.
- Paul expected the older women to teach younger women. Titus 2:3-5
- Paul demanded that widows be cared for correctly. 1 Timothy 5:3-7
- Conclusion: Much more could be said, but it is clear that Paul did not follow any of the traditions from his day which held a low view of women and their service.

### **Application for our Churches**

- Women are vital to the growth and health of local churches.
- Women not only contribute to Christian ministry, they also should be the recipients of ministry.
- We must be careful to avoid imposing our culture's understanding of women upon our local churches.
- Women must be protected, as infants, girls, and adults, within the local church.

## Lecture 2

### A Biblical Understanding of Male Headship

#### Introduction:

The second important issue related to women and the pastorate is the concept of male headship. Male headship has implications to marriage (Eph. 5) in that wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands are to lovingly lead their wives.

The concept of male headship also has implications to local church traditions. Our text is one of the more difficult passages in Scripture but I believe that we can work our way through it. You will notice right away that Paul affirms in this passage that male headship has direct implications for the traditions of the local church.

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 11:2-13

#### Traditions and the Local Church 2

- Interpretive Issues
  - How does verse 2 relate to verses 3-16?
    - First, verse 2 is an introduction. It was given as a complement and not to be taken as a statement of fact given that he is about to confront an area where there is disagreement.
    - Second, verse 2 appears to be the introduction for chapters 11-14 which deal with traditions relating to women, communion, and the use of spiritual gifts within the local church.
  - What does it mean to be covered or adorned?
    - Two major positions
      - The wearing of a veil that covers at least the top of the head if not the entire head.
      - The unbound wearing of a woman's hair in which it falls down her back.
    - The second position is preferable (more likely).
      - The LXX uses *akatakaluptos* in Lev. 13:45 to legislate that a leper woman must leave her hair unbound as a warning to all.
      - More convincingly, in Num. 5:18, it uses a related word to describe the loose flowing hair of an adulterous woman.
      - Most convincing is that verse 15 teaches that a woman's hair was given to her for a covering.
      - The common connotation of loose flowing hair implying a sexually provocative woman was taught in Scripture and it was assumed in many ancient cultures.
      - Observation: Today, when a woman wants to be seductive on a hair commercial, they make her hair long and full of volume while blowing a fan through it.
  - What does the word head mean? Answer = authority

- Some recent scholars imagine something like “source” or “foundation.”
  - Yet, the Biblical data is quite clear that authority is almost always the idea of headship and the context demands it in this case.
- Specific cultural issues related to prayer
  - Hair Coverings and Male Prayer 4; 7
    - Men are not to pray with their heads covered. 4
    - This means with long hair (c.f. 14).
    - Paul affirms that this is true of men, not only when they pray, but at all times. 7
    - To pray with long hair brings dishonor to either the man or His Savior and this case, probably both.
  - Hair Coverings and Female Prayer 5-6
    - An uncovered head and a shaved head were both signs of immorality and/or pagan religion.
    - Paul affirms that a woman praying with an uncovered head disgraces the woman as she is praying.
    - Note what it does not say:
      - The woman’s prayer goes unanswered.
      - The woman was immoral in thought or deed.
    - It merely affirms that she is disgracing herself.

**The Essential:** Paul’s method for determining the correct roles for women in the church.

- Conformity to Divine Headship 3
  - Divine Example
    - Ontological Trinity: Essence or Kind of Being
    - Economic Trinity: Function
    - Jesus’ obedience to the Father does not reduce His essence in any way.
  - Similarly, men and women are of the same essence and both are made in God’s image.
  - Similarly, men are given the headship and women the submissive role. This is how God intends men and women to function.
- Consistency with the Created Order 8-9
  - Paul does deny or demean God’s image in women. C.f. Gen. 1:26
  - Rather, the Created order (man—woman) reveals that one is given precedence.
  - The fact that Eve came from Adam reveals closeness but also original authority (similar to an adult child who continues to honor his parents because the parent came first and he came from them).
  - Paul’s allusion to the created order demonstrates that this is a universal concept and not a culturally bound one.

#### **Applications for our LCs**

- Christian men should not pray with their heads covered which means they should avoid long hair. What constitutes long hair is partially defined by cultures.

- Christian women should pray with their heads covered and God gave them hair for this purpose. They also should adorn their hair in modest ways. This is also a cultural issue.
- More to the point, male headship is a legitimate concept that must be taught in our churches.
  - We need to develop male leadership in our churches.
  - We also understand that male headship is based on the clear idea that men and women are equal before God in that we are all made in God's image.
  - We also affirm that gender ought to define the roles that men and women perform in our churches.

### **Lecture 3**

#### **Women Deserve a Voice in the Local Church**

##### **Introduction:**

Paul wrote one of the most difficult passages relating to women and church. In this passage, Paul is going to affirm that women should remain silent in the church. We will learn that there are multiple possible interpretations of this passage but that only one adequately handles the internal evidence from the passage. Our goal is to discover if the New Testament allows women to speak publically in the church.

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 14:33-36

##### **Context:**

- This text is located between the discussion of spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14) and the resurrection discussion of chapter 15.
- This passage is a strong prohibition related to women and the church.

##### **Possible Interpretations**

- Absolute silence
  - 1 Cor. 11: 11-14 reveals that women were allowed to pray in the church.
  - Verse 16 reveals that we are talking about local church practice.
  - Therefore, this position is not possible.
- Absolute Rule
  - They claim that the Chapter 14 provides God's preferred rule and that the women praying in chapter 11 were an acceptance to that rule.
  - This position makes little sense because it puts Paul at odds with himself.
  - This would be especially odd since Paul worked with missionary couples (Pricilla and Aquilla) as part of his ministry team.
- Local Cultural Problem
  - These people claim that Paul was addressing a specific problem in a certain local church. Often, they imagine a noisy woman who is disrupting the church service.
  - Proponents often claim that women were uneducated and just didn't know when to speak. This reveals a lack of awareness of the women in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.
  - Others who hold similar views offer equally confusing suggestions.

- Some claim that the women were allowed to prophesy and speak in tongues but not interpret those tongues. That is what the silence refers to.
  - This is a long stretch.
  - It also seems hard to imagine that women to be used to reveal truth at the same time they cannot understand it.

### **Concerns**

- The idea that women were rude or ignorant is chauvinistic and ignores the importance of women in the NT church.
- If both men and women were rude and ignorant and Paul only attacks the women, that makes him unethical.

### **My Best Interpretation**

- Paul is clearly dealing with speaking in tongues and prophesying in chapter 14.
- This same phrase is used in verse 28 of a man who speaks in tongues without an interpreter. He is to wait for an interpreter.
- Now in verse 34, Paul calls for the women to cease from speaking in tongues.
  - Apparently women were speaking in tongues.
  - Paul recognizes this as a problem of disorder within the early local churches.
  - Paul looked to the OT law (verse 34b-35) for a precedent. It taught that women were not to speak in the tabernacle and temple worship. Thus, this is a universal concept.
  - Paul continues to add prohibitions in verse 37-38 that limited the activities in the church. Thus, this passage must be understood as shaping the church culture.

### **Applications for Churches Today**

- I do not believe that tongues are for today but if they were, women should not prophesy or speak in tongues in a local church. This would basically end the practice in most churches.
- We must be careful that we do not unnecessarily limit women from ministry.
- Women can pray in the church (chapter 11) and they should feel free to do so.
- A Final more general application: Women should never cause division or disruption in a local church. These women should remain quite.

**Lecture 4**  
**Women are Not to have Authority over Men**  
**1 Timothy 2:8-15**

**Introduction:**

By the end of Paul's ministry, the early churches were struggling with an early doctrinal heresy. This is not the setting to speak fully about it. Nonetheless, one part of that heresy included the notion that the male/female distinction no longer applied. It may be that they misunderstood Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:28 that there is "neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ." Whatever the reason, it appears that some within the early church were abandoning gender distinction and roles.

This appears to be the setting for our text. In verse 8, Paul calls for unified public prayer. This prayer most likely would have been by men and women because the word "men" was used in Greek when men and women were in the same group. It could also refer to only men. It is important to note that one man in a group of women would call for the use of masculine designations even when women were part of that group.

**Call to outer modesty and inward piety. 9-10**

- Paul did not oppose jewelry or makeup.
- Rather, he cautioned women from trusting in it.
- He also affirmed that inward piety is that which makes a woman truly beautiful.

**Call for women to learn Scripture quietly. 11**

- Once again, male headship and submissiveness was expected for women.
- The natural outworking of this submissiveness is quite submission to the teaching of God's Word.
- CONCEPT: The teaching of God's Word demands submission because the teaching itself is a form of leadership.

**Establishment of 2 restrictions on women in the Local Church**

- Women are not to teach Christian doctrine to men.
  - The word "teach" is the most common word in the NT for teaching.
  - It occurs 97 times in the NT.
  - It was used 104 times in the LXX.
  - It always bears the idea of formal instruction.
  - Within the context, this phrase must be referring to instruction in Christian doctrine.
- Women are not to exercise authority over men.
  - This word only appears 1 time in the NT.
  - It was never used in the LXX.
  - It is used in non-biblical literature as the action of "controlling" or "to give orders" or "to dictate."

- In other words, a woman should not be giving orders to men in a church like a military leader would give orders to those under his authority.

#### **Reason for the 2 restrictions 13-14**

- Once again, this instruction is based on the created order. Adam first which means that Adam is responsible for Eve. This is evidenced by the fact that Eve took the fruit first but Adam is held accountable for plunging humanity into sin.
- As such, it is universal for all who are created. This includes people of all time and in all cultures.

#### **Difficult passage to interpret that we do not need to address in this setting 15**

- This is probably the most difficult passage to interpret in the NT.
- It does not directly impact our subject so we do not have to address it here.

#### **Important Similar Passage: 1 Tim. 5:17**

- Those who deserve financial compensation in the church are those who “rule well.”
  - This word is used 8 times in the NT.
  - It always has the idea of “managing” or “leading.”
  - In 1 Thess. 5:12, this same word is used. It clearly has the idea of headship.
- Paul gives two actions that explain how the pastor rules his church.
  - He labors in the word. (*logos*)
  - He teaches (*didaskalos*)
- Connection to 1 Tim. 2:8-15.
  - Both passages deal with who has authority over the congregation.
  - Both passages deal with teaching.
  - But in this passage, we learn that the way a pastor exercises his authority over the church is by his study of the word and his teaching/preaching.
  - This helps us understand why Paul did not allow a woman to teach Christian doctrine to men. In the very act of teaching men, a woman would be acting like a pastor.
  - As such, it is clear that Paul, on the grounds of Creation, affirmed that women should not have pastoral authority over men. This means that she should not lead men by her study of the word and teaching.

#### **Applications**

- We should not have women pastors and we do not train women to be pastors.
- There are many teaching settings in the church for women but they should not include men.

- Woman should not seek to teach with “pastoral authority” within the church. This includes the way in which they seek to train other women.
- There are some duties that a pastor has that are not directly related to his leadership by study and preaching. Many of these duties are shared with other church members and women can perform most of them. (ex. Visiting the elderly, planning a special meal, etc.)

**Discussion**

- What duties does a pastor have that can be shared by the women in his church?
- Why is it important to remind women of the many ministries that they ought to have in the church when teaching that women should not function like pastors?