

Part III

PUBLIC MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND TODAY

First, we have the time of the early church when it was vibrant, alive, powerful, and while under severe persecution was winning multitudes to Jesus Christ in such proportions that it has not been equaled since. What was it like? Our New Testament scriptures reveal much to us. Paul wrote to the saints in Ephesus, a Gentile city, and told them that the blood of Christ had broken-down the wall of division between Jew and Gentile and brought all of them into one body by the cross (Eph. 2:11-17). Therefore, he wrote:

“Through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit [only one, and it is the same Spirit] unto the Father [only one, and it is the same Father]. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints [unity of all saints everywhere], and are of God’s household [a family relationship with God as the Father], having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [we are living stones built upon the lives of these holy men of the past and present], Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone [a personal relationship with Christ as Lord], in whom all [the entire body of Christ] the building fitly framed together [each one cooperating with the other, laying down his life for Christ and each other] is growing [it is alive and fruitful] into a holy temple in the Lord [it is discarding the ways and weights of this world for “holiness unto the Lord”; it is being separated unto Him for we know that “without holiness, no one will see the Lord.” Heb. 12:1, 14]: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit [a dwelling place of God in which He lives and manifests His life by His Spirit]. (Eph. 2:18-22 rev.)

Oh, what a church! It was powerful. The supernatural manifestations of God were continual. People were added to the church daily by the Lord as they all continued in one accord with praises to God; they were steadfast in the apostles’ teaching, in fellowship, in breaking of bread informally from house to house, and in prayers (Acts 2:41-47). The fear of the Lord was present. All that believed were together and had all things common; they prayed together and were filled with the Holy Spirit and boldness (Acts 4:24 - 5:11). This was the early church.

It was in this atmosphere that the women were taught their ministries. None assumed positions of leadership, as they were too busy with their own tasks. In the writings of the early church, writings of such men as Cyprian, Tertullian, Clement, and Origin, we find that women were never in positions of leadership. Around the third century orders arose of "deaconesses," but they were not women in leadership. Rather, they were orders that ministered to the sick and needy, went on visitation, and taught other women. Although not permitted to baptize, they helped the women who were being baptized. Thus, the early church was in divine order regarding the public ministry of women.

This situation did not change much until we approach the era in which we are now living. Satan, of course, has always attempted to destroy God's order, but as long as the word of God is held as the guide, there never has been a problem with women in authority. In approximately the last hundred years, the word of God has been under the most vicious attack since the early church, and that from within the ranks of the "organized" church. Leading this attack are men of supposed scholarship who profess to be Christians, but are only "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Mt. 7:15-29).

They systematically destroy in the minds of nominal or immature Christians the authenticity and inspiration of the Word of God (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:1-17; Eph. 4:14). Their followers have degenerated into men who not only follow their pernicious ways, but deny the abundance of scientific and archeological evidence continually being found to prove them wrong, evidence which supports the scriptures as the inspired Word of God (II Pet. 1:20 - 3:18). Many are the writers of the scripture who have warned us about them and the days in which we live (Jude).

It is in this atmosphere, then, that false cults have so rapidly sprung into being. We find that many such cults originated from deceived women: Christian Science from Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy; Unity School of Christianity from Myrtle Fillmore; the revival of spiritism from the Fox sisters, Margaret and Katie; and Theosophy from Helen Blavatsky and Annie Besant.

Today, we must compare these cults with many sects of Christianity. These sects are the existing divisions which were established with orthodox doctrines concerning the person of Jesus Christ, some of which are rapidly becoming false cults due to "the apostasy." Women are no more prone to carnality than men! However, being the weaker vessel, they are often less able to withstand spiritual pressure (I Pet. 3:7).

Now, we come to more recent years. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early 1900's, there arose a very gifted woman to a most prominent ministry. Had she obeyed the men who had spiritual authority over her, her career would not have ended in such deception and disrepute. In more recent years, other women have received gifts of healings and miracles which have enabled them to rise to respected positions. Because of the lukewarmness of the churches and their primary interest in their immediate physical condition, rather than their eternal riches, it is quite easy to exalt these God given ministries above the three more important ones, those of apostle, prophet, and teacher (I Cor. 12:28). These three ministries not only exercise gifts ministering to the physical body, but also minister toward the perfection of the saints in spirit and soul (Eph. 4:7-16). Many persons are still too carnal and selfish to appreciate these three types of ministry. They are used together with the evangelist and pastor to

bring the church to maturity; that is, a conforming to the image of Christ, which means dying out completely to self and living wholly unto God. The church needs more preaching of the gospel and the cross in the life of the believers to accomplish this. The gospel is still:

“the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from [Greek: *ek*, out of] faith to [Greek: *eis*, into] faith: as it is written ‘The just shall live by [out of] faith.’ ”

(Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 2:4)

And again,

“For the preaching [Greek: *logos*, word] of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved [Greek: being saved] it is the power of God.”

(I Cor. 1:18)

Notice the Greek has a present passive participle, meaning we are being saved. Salvation means wholeness. No Christian is completely whole until he comes to a **“perfect [full grown] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”** (Eph. 4:13). Notice, also, that our life in Christ is Christ being completely formed in us (Gal. 4:19). We grow out of one level of faith into a higher level (Rom. 1:17). Our faith changes as we mature and become more holy. We experience **“faith working [operating] through love”** (Gal. 5:6). Therefore, love increases faith. It comes by revelation, and it is our righteousness being worked out in us (Phil. 3:15; 2:12-13). Salvation, righteousness, and sanctification are all imparted to us positionally in Christ, but must be worked out and perfected experientially (Rom. 4:6, 11; I Cor. 1:30; I Thes. 5:23; II Tim. 2:22).

In the cross, we find that, first, Christ is crucified for us to pay for our sins.

“Christ died for our sins.”

(I Cor. 15:3)

Second, following our acceptance of this truth and our repentance, we are to recognize our place with Him on the cross, that is, that we have been crucified with Him.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me.”

(Gal. 2:20 NAS)

This realization is accomplished after repentance and after we receive the Holy Spirit and are, therefore, **“born of the Spirit”** (Jn. 3:1-8; Rom. 6:4). Also, this spiritual birth may occur before or after being **“born of water”** (Acts 8:12-17; 10:43-48). Also,

“one died for all, therefore all died; and that He died for all, that from now on they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”

(II Cor. 5:14-15 rev.)

Every true believer should see this because that is why he is buried in baptism. We do not bury a live person, but we bury our “old man” that was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:4-6). Hallelujah!

Third, one work of the cross very few believers accept and understand is the daily dying on our cross, with Christ working this in us from within (Phil. 2:13; 4:13). To Him be all the glory. Jesus said,

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself [unselfishness], and take up his cross daily [we must willfully do this each day], and follow Me.”
(Lk. 9:23)

This is the life of:

“Not My will, but Thine, be done.” (Jn. 6:38; Lk. 22:42)

Again,

“Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (Jn. 12:24 rev)

This, my dear friends, is not the dying and burying of our “old man.” The old nature cannot bear good fruit. Like begets like. God said, “**Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind**” (Gen. 1:24 rev.). This applies also to us human beings. We must die to our own life, our own good desires, or sinless life, if you will, and through the resurrection power of the Spirit of the indwelling Christ, much fruit will come forth. Jesus went on to say,

“He that loveth his life, [Greek: *psyche*, meaning soul, ourself, our intellects, emotion, and will] shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” (Jn. 12:25)

Again it is written,

“and they loved not their lives [souls] unto the death.” (Rev. 12:11)

And again in reference to the discipline of our bodies,

“I keep under [Greek: *upopiazo*, literally to strike under the eye, therefore treat with rough discipline, buffet] my body, and bring it into subjection.”
(I Cor. 9:27)

You cannot grow out of carnality unless you “**present your body as a living sacrifice**” (Rom. 12:1 rev.). God says this is the only reasonable thing to do and, in the light of eternal judgment, it most assuredly is (II Cor. 5:10-11). This is imperative in order to know “**the good and acceptable and perfect will of God**” (Rom. 12:2). This is why most Christians have not even begun to know the will of God for their lives. It is one of non-conformity to the world. This is

why in this age of conformity, few have experienced this abundant and fruitful life with all its fullness. Some have in part, but we only get the fullness according to the degree of sacrificing our lives for Him.

Whether you have ears to hear the messages in this book and are able to receive God's truth will be determined for many of you by whether you have presented your bodies a living sacrifice and are "dying" on your cross daily. Some after starting have found it did not appeal to their selfishness and put their cross back down.

We can see the backslidden condition of the church and the rebellious state of the world by looking at the significant positions that are of importance today.

First, let us look at the true church, the body of Christ. One of the most widely known ministries of healing of our generation and certainly one of outstanding power was a woman with gifts of faith, healings, miracles, the word of knowledge, and others not usually publicly manifested. When this woman functioned with her God-given charismata (gifts of God's grace), the moving of the Spirit was simply beautiful. However, because she did function out of divine order by preaching and teaching, and because of the misunderstanding of the various charismata given to her by God, which are for women as well as men, there was often confusion, rejection, and lack of kindness and love toward her and these gifts. What is needed is the knowledge of the truth, for Jesus said concerning sin, and these attitudes are sin, "**If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . [and, if] the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed**" (Jn. 8:31-36 NAS). The first truth we must understand is that we are one body in Christ and are commanded to love one another and maintain the unity of the Spirit. Until we do this, we will never understand correct doctrine in all areas and come to the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:3, 13). We must first be willing to love one another and accept one another as Christ accepted us, without murmuring and complaining about one another or our beliefs (Col. 3:13).

More truth that we will come to understand is that there are many different charismata given. For too long, many have been lumped together under the title of "preacher," resulting in confusion. Every ministry that requires speaking is not the same. One may be called as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, preacher, or teacher, all of which are different ministries. However, a person may have more than one ministry (I Tim. 2:7). These are all gifts for men only, but a woman when functioning in a ministry such as prophecy or prayer or gifts of healings or miracles or word of knowledge must also of necessity speak out under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The problem today as well as in the recent past has been that gifted women in the body of Christ often act as pastors and teachers, totally out of divine order. When this occurs, deception always results, especially in doctrine or through revelations. Those women who follow their example will likewise be deceived and also usually lack "**the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God**" (I Pet. 3:4 NAS).

Secondly, let us look at the professing church, that great ecclesiastical Babylonian Empire. During the period of 1969-1973 when this book was originally drafted, the first woman was elected President of the National Council of Churches in the United States. Now more and more women are being elected to eldership and other positions of authority throughout the daughters of Babylon, the denominations or sects of this vast, worldwide, idolatrous system.

Third, let us look at the physical descendants of Abraham. The nation of Israel from 1969-1974 was under the leadership of a woman, a grandmother born in Russia and once a schoolteacher in the United States.

Fourth, let us look at Judaism in the United States. In 1972 Reformed Judaism ordained their first woman rabbi, meaning teacher.

And fifth, let us look at the one-world government being organized by man without even a word of prayer allowed. The President of the United Nations General Assembly in 1969 was another woman, this time from the continent of Africa, a previous one having come from the subcontinent of India. Now, nations of the world are beginning to elect women as their leaders or into high positions of leadership as never before. In fact, it is remarkable that the very week this book was being typed in its final draft, the first woman was elected to head the government in Great Britain, making her Europe's first woman prime minister.

We see, beloved, just as it was foretold by the apostles and prophets of old, God's order is being inverted by Satan in every area; and the world is in chaos, fear, and confusion as never before, and there are very few men of God in national prominence to speak for God on matters of urgent importance. But, just wait, God is preparing His spokesmen, and if judgment must start at the house of God, with whom do you think He starts in the church? (I Pet. 4:17). Yes, the leaders (Eze. 9:6; Mal. 3:3-5).

So, beloved, to summarize this topic very briefly, we find that God created man first and created him differently from the woman, who was made to be his helpmate and to be under his command. When she functions in this manner, she will enjoy the true freedom of the Holy Spirit as well as divine rest in her spirit, soul, and body. The teachings of the entire Old and New Testament scriptures confirm this, even to the detail of the root meaning of the words themselves. Also, the history of the people of God before Christ as well as the total history of the first century church confirms this summary. There are no exceptions or contradictions. Only when God's people are backslidden and rebellious against the ways of the Lord is their order perverted and Satan able to bring destruction and division and heresy into the church.

The women are to grow in all respects in the Spirit, produce all the fruit of the Spirit, and be clothed upon with the Spirit. In regard to the different gifts of the Spirit, the ones involving authority such as apostles, pastors, teachers, and so forth, are limited to the few men God chooses and qualifies. The woman's role in the assembly is, therefore, different. Here, also, she is to be a real helpmate to

the man in bringing forth a life of ministry in which the two together can then truly be the salt of the earth.

In conclusion, let me say that the motivating factor in all ministry should be the Spirit of love. Without love, revelation is not complete. It is love for God that will restore the church to proper order and, therefore, to its rightful place in the world. It is love for our neighbor, as we must be willing to put others first and lay down our own lives, that will bring forth His life in all its beauty and fullness. Jesus said,

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not the things which I say?”
(Lk. 6:46 rev.)

And,

“He that findeth his life [soul] shall lose it: and he that loseth his life [soul] for my sake shall find it.”
(Mt. 10:39)

Are we willing to love others first? Jesus said,

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life [soul] for his friends.”
(Jn. 15:13)

It is love for the Lord and the Lord in His body, the church, the bride of Christ, that will cause us to love, submit to, and appreciate both one another and the different ministries that each of us has been given sovereignly by God for the purpose of protecting us, and perfecting and bringing us into the practical expression of **“one body in Christ”** that we **“may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head even Christ”** (Rom. 12:3-16; Eph. 4:11-16 rev.).

I pray that God will grant us the grace to fulfill His purposes, the desire to know Him and His ways whatever the cost, to obey His Word even though we may not fully understand, the peace that binds us together in our diligence always to preserve the unity of the Spirit, and the love that binds us together unto our perfection.

In Jesus name and for His sake, Amen.

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This is the end of The Public Ministry of Women, Part 3
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