

## WOMEN AS PRIESTS AND BISHOPS

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I am not sexist. I believe in the equality of the sexes. I believe that women are vastly superior to men on certain issues. I believe that in any church there is a need for women to help and counsel other women particularly on problems that are feminine.

I believe that we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3.28).

The purpose of this Galatian epistle was because the Galatians were turning away from God and Paul puts aside gender and says that all believers are sons of God whether they were a Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. If believers, they are all the children of God (Galatians 3.26). Salvation is free to all people upon their confession of faith and repentance.

Although this verse clearly states the position of all believers it does not say that males and females can all do the same things.

This is born out by Paul stating that women should be silent in the churches and should not speak (1 Corinthians 14.34); that they should wear a head covering (1 Corinthians 11. 5) and that a bishop must be the husband of one wife and therefore male (1 Timothy 3 etc.).

A woman silent in the church uses the word *lalein* for speaking which could be rendered chatter or gossip. It has been suggested that the head covering was a veil but the Scripture talks about the glory of a woman's hair which was an attraction to men and should be covered to prevent that attraction to men.

Paul also says that a woman should not preach (1 Timothy 2.12).

The question now arises. Should Christians believe and act on what the Bible says?

If the answer is No or Not Necessarily, what criterion do we employ to determine what parts of the Bible are no longer applicable in our day? Do we have a right to pick and choose? Do we say that the Crucifixion did not happen? Do we say that Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead? Or it ain't necessarily so?

Are we going to say that Paul was sexist? If so, how does this blend with his high commendation of women?

The Lord Jesus chose twelve disciples, all men. Was He being sexist? Note his kind attitude to women and His commendation of them including His mother and His mercy to sinful women and His kindness to those marvellous women with their faithfulness over the first Easter?

What might have been said if He had chosen all women?

Some will say that this is a cultural thing of the first century of Christianity and that women were subjugated. They were treated unfairly it may be claimed, but in our present day, these injustices are being put right. Others will point to the fact that the first sinner was a woman, Eve by name. Are we now going to cast doubts upon this?

The Old and New Testament condemns homosexuality (Romans 1. 26 talks about men abandoning their natural desire for women and engaging in vile lust towards other men) which is called an abomination. In Leviticus 18 .22 God says Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind; it is an abomination. This is also stated in Leviticus 20.13. Many Christians today argue with the Scripture

and say that the Bible does not say that and, even if it does, we have moved on from those days. It is asserted nowadays that homosexuality is neither wrong nor a sin and, that being so, the Bible is wrong, misleading or misinterpreted.

People will say that this issue of homosexuality is a cultural thing of the times. Many Romans and Greeks, although most were probably married, also had a male sexual partner and it is asserted that Paul was merely referring to this. But, if it was wrong in Paul's time, what has changed to make it acceptable now? If it was criminal and morally wrong in the UK until Harold Wilson's government of the 1960s, what has changed? Why has morality changed?

Another complaint made by some women and feminists is the verse 1 Peter 3.7 which refers to women as the weaker sex but the critics do not seem to take note of how the men are spoken of in this verse which states that they must honour their wives. The Biblical concept is that man has the greater responsibility and the woman has less and this is probably what is meant by their being weaker. These were days of unsympathetic husbands and Peter has to give such husbands instruction. Many wives are unable to stand the physical strength of their husband and, therefore, are said to be the weaker sex. She has equal rights with the man and so he must not make her life a misery. Men must not be bullies.

2 Timothy 3.6 tells us about false teachers who influence silly women laden with sin and lusts. It recalls how Satan lured Eve to sin.

Titus 2 .4 tells us that women should be sober. The word does not refer to alcohol. It means self-control.

Women must dress modestly at all times writes Paul in 1 Timothy 2.9. This angers some Christian women and feminists and is dealt with fully in my article Women's Dress. I will not repeat it all here only to say that how women have dressed over the centuries has trapped men into sexual sins. Of course, it is the man's fault if he attacks any female and it is argued that a woman should be able to wear what she likes.

If anyone plays with fire fully knowing it is dangerous and is injured or causes a blaze whose fault is it?

At a Court case before a female judge, a girl brought a charge of rape against a man. He was guilty and rightly went to prison. The judge asked the girl to come to Court the next day wearing exactly what she did when she was raped. And so she did. Her miniskirt was like a small belt and she showed much cleavage. The judge said, "If you dress like that you are asking for trouble".

I agree that women should be modest in how they dress at all times. It may prevent some sexual attacks on women. Being wise is better than taking risks!

But to return to the main point. The Bible makes it clear that men have the responsibility to be priests, bishops and pastors. There is no Biblical authority that women should be priests, bishops or pastors. In fact, they are not to teach as we have already seen.

People will quote, 'In Christ there is neither male or female' but that means that all people regardless of gender have equal access to God and Heaven. Salvation is possible to both males and females.

Some has said, 'If women can be priests then men can be nuns!' That is, of course, ridiculous although a point is being made.

There are those who speak about a women's health and that, as a consequence, they can be moody and difficult whereas men do not have these problems but, believe me, they can be predictable and boring. It is unfair to categorise all women as regularly moody and difficult.

As we have seen God values the service of women in the household, with the family and in the local church. Paul testifies to this as well. One example is Phebe in Romans 16. Compare 1 Timothy 5 which gives instructions as to how women should be honoured and specifically deals with widows and older women.

Women are not second rate. Certainly not. It is just that their roles are different but still vitally important.

In some areas of the country known to me there are more women Anglican priests, pastors and ministers than men.

I have to say that I have heard women faithfully preach the Gospel and I believe that this ministry is both acceptable and to be encouraged among children and at women's meetings. But the Bible teaches that they must not preach and usurp authority over men.

Should we not all follow the teachings of the New Testament?

Isn't that what true Christians do?

It is probably the rise of feminism and the increasing dominance of secular society that has encouraged women to want to be priests and pastors. If this is so, or for whatever reason, the Biblical teaching is being ignored.

How can a woman be a bishop and the husband of one man?

This is all part of the decline of Christianity and the decline is the disregard of Scripture.

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