***The Role of Women in Christ's Ministry - PH79-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:1-3***

One of the things that it is important to remember about God is that He is perfect. Consequently, everything that God does is perfect. Everything He thinks is perfect. In Genesis 1:31, we read, "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." So when God finished His creative work, the Bible says it was perfect. This included not only the material universe, but it also included the human beings that He had created. The Bible reveals, however, that God's perfect creation and His perfectly functioning humanity has been poisoned by the sin that was injected in the Garden of Eden. In order to prevent the consequences of living forever in that spiritually and physically toxic condition, man was removed from proximity to the tree of life. If he could have been able to have access to that tree, he never would have died. He would have continued forever in that separation from God under a spiritually and a physically poisoned condition. So the creation that began perfect, both material and human, has been disrupted by the poison interjected by the sin in the Garden of Eden.

So in Romans 8:21, we read this fact presented in the words, "Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption that is the redemption of our body." The effects of the sin poison is perhaps most clearly evident in human relationships. People are in conflict. People are filled with antagonisms and bitterness toward one another. People act in self-will. People are not what God intended them to be. People are not what God created them to be.

Satan has, since the Garden of Eden, filled the thinking of mankind with human viewpoint concepts, and this has ruined human relationships. People, consequently, suffer basically from mental illness. The thinking of people is wrong and, consequently, their relationships are wrong. The only way the thinking of people can be corrected back to that perfect condition of the original creation is through the intake of the Word of God. That's why the Word of God is so critical. The whole book of Proverbs is a condensed summary book to try to give people, in a massive way, divine viewpoint concepts, and to give people, in a massive way, the antidote for the poison of human viewpoint that was injected as the result of the rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Mental illness, in varying degrees, is the thing that every human being suffers from.

This kind of mental illness and this kind of tension and disruption of human relationships can also be true of Christians who fall into human viewpoint thinking – even Christians who are active and serving the Lord. Such is the case in Philippi in our study of the beginning of Philippians 4. We have two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who were very active in Christian service, but who were reflecting this poison condition of human relationships in a personal conflict that was affecting them, that they were carrying on and that they were involved in, and which was affecting the whole congregation. It was showing up in the fact of pushiness and willfulness, which are two prime evidences that a person's thinking is functioning on Satan's human viewpoint.

These people forgot that there is coming a day of evaluation. There is a judgment day coming. You can be a wheeler-dealer; you can be pushy; and, you can be arrogant and self-willed, but you're going to have a report card day someday when you are going to be evaluated as a believer before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Euodia and Syntyche were forgetting that in this conflict.

So Paul gives a solution to these two females who are in conflict to solve their problem. He doesn't tell them to cry; to let their hair down; to ask each other's forgiveness; or, to go to a counselor. He tells them to get their minds back on divine viewpoint thinking. He tells them to get their thinking back to a unity. The way they do that is by finding what God thinks, and getting back to the Lord's thinking, so that they will not be in conflict, but that there will be a unity of thinking, and to forget the past and go on. He directs them, therefore, to operate mutually on the Lord's Bible doctrine principles. He doesn't assign them some gimmicks for them to do or some lists of things for them to follow. All disruptions in human relationships can only be resolved, please remember, by the grace of God, and by the grace of God alone.

**Freud**

This is why modern Freudian psychology and psychiatry is in direct conflict with the Bible. Psychiatry and psychology, as it is based upon Freudian thinking, says that a man has a conscience, and he has guilt feelings over this conscience, but this conscience and the guilt feelings that it produces are because of society. They are because of the way his parents taught him something or treated him. They are because the way society has been treating him. And Freudian psychology is 100% wrong. The Word of God says that deep within the nature of man is consciousness of God. Your God consciousness is your conscience. Your conscience screams out against the mental illness; against the tensions; against the disruptions; and, against the imperfections that are in us compared to God's original creation.

Freud says to wipe out your conscience, which cannot be done. There's only one thing that can resolve human problems and human conflicts, and that's the grace of God through the Word of God. This is the very thing that modern psychiatry and psychology reject. So if you've got some mental problems, and if you've got some problems between yourself and some other human being, you can go ahead and spend hundreds and hundreds of dollars lying on somebody's psychiatric couch, pouring out your soul if you want to. Or you can take the Word of God and start reading it. You can get some tapes and start studying divine viewpoint, and you will discover that you will have all the answers to getting yourself in right relationships with other people, providing they are oriented to divine viewpoint and are capable of right responses.

If you don't have this, you will never solve any problem you have with any human being. Freudian psychology is a fraud. Never forget that Freud was a fraud. What he taught is in such dire conflict with the Word of God as to be pathetic. The more you read the wisdom literature like Proverbs, the more appalled you are that any human being could take seriously the guff of modern psychology and psychiatry. Only what God's grace can do for us can solve these problems.

Paul asks a super grace believer named Suzygus in Philippi, who is known to all, to help these two women get back to divine viewpoint to resolve their conflict, and thus to bring peace in the Christian community in Philippi. This was very important because these two women were active participants with Paul in his missionary work. They were not the gals who were simply orbiting in their own interests in life, and their own segmented, limited sphere of activities. These were women who were engaged in the ministry of the Word of God in a very vital way. The apostle Paul knew them, and he knew them well because they had, in the past, been key members of the team. Women played a very vital role in the New Testament church. Consequently, the influence of women, and the effect of women, on a congregational life is very great.

That's true today. Women who are functioning on divine viewpoint are angels. Those who are functioning on human viewpoint are demons. It's nice when you can get away from a demon. It's terrible when you cannot. It's nice when you can be associated with angels. It is a tragedy when you are separated from angels.

**The Role of Women in the New Testament**

Today, we're going to look at the role of women in general, because this is the background of this problem. What Euodia and Syntyche did in the New Testament church in ministry was exactly in line with God's plan. Women are a very major factor in the life and the functioning of the local church congregation. When you start reading through the Scriptures, these passages that tell us about the activity of women and what women were engaged in, you are suddenly struck with the overwhelming impression and the overwhelming realization that women are fantastically important in the local church ministry. It could literally not be done without them.

**The Ministry of Christ**

Let's go back to the ministry of Jesus Christ Himself, and the women who participated in His ministry. Obviously, Jesus Christ was one who had created the woman. It was Jesus Christ who put Adam to sleep in the garden. It was Jesus Christ who opened Adam's side and took out that rib. It was Jesus Christ who created, out of that part of the body of Adam, the woman, Eve. It was Jesus Christ who brought them together in the marriage relationship in the Garden of Eden. So Jesus had maximum appreciation, as well as maximum understanding, for women. He had a high regard, for one thing, for the spiritual potential of women. He had created a woman so that she could be a fantastic spiritual person. This was obvious in His treatment of women constantly. They had great spiritual potential.

You don't have to look very far to realize that women very often far outstrip men in spiritual devotion and advancement toward the super grace life. Many a time, a man is married to a woman who is far his spiritual superior. That's a terrible condition, and you would be wise never to marry somebody who is your spiritual superior if you're a man. If you're a woman, you would be a fool not to marry someone who is your spiritual superior. If you marry a man who's your inferior, you're asking for nothing but misery. The Lord Jesus Christ created a woman so that she could have great capacity for entering into spiritual things. Consequently, the Lord, as the fountainhead of divine viewpoint, had the most cordial relationships with women. He did not look down upon them as inferior creatures. Instead, he considered them fully capable of both positive responses to divine viewpoint, as well as negative responses to Bible doctrine.

For example, in Luke 12:53, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches that women do exactly this. They go one of two ways: "The father shall be divided against the son, the son against the father, the mother against the daughter (spiritual division), and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Here are several relationships of women to women. These women are separated from one another. They do not have a cordial relationship. They do not have a ground of camaraderie. The reason for it is that one of the women is negative toward divine viewpoint, and the other is positive. They are separated on this ground completely.

So the Lord was teaching that women are capable of going in either direction. They could go on to super grace, or they could go on to the most groveling, degraded reversionism. Jesus honored the faith of women in Himself as the Son of God. He was very kind to women. In Luke 8:43, we have the story of the woman who had a chronic hemorrhage, and she was healed simply by touching the hem of the garment of Jesus: "And a woman having an issue of blood 12 years had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed by them, came behind Him and touched the border of His garment, and immediately her issue of blood staunched.

"Jesus said, 'Who touched me?' When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, "Master, the multitude crowds You and presses You, and You say, Who touched me?' Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceive that power is gone out of Me.' When the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling and fell down before Him. She declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said to her (notice His tenderness and kindness), 'Daughter, be of good comfort. Your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'"

Here was a woman who was sick of going to doctors, and not being able to resolve her physical problem. She saw in Jesus Christ the power of God working. She reached out for Him, as women have through the centuries reached out for Jesus Christ, and His power has met the need. The women who do not reach out for Jesus Christ are the ones who are never healed. They're the ones who become animals. They're the ones who go downhill. They're the ones who are failures in marriage; who are failures in business; who are failures in social relationships; and, who are failures as church workers, because they are not reaching out to Jesus Christ, the most tender man toward women who ever lived.

We also have the case of the Syrophenician woman. In Mark 7:25, we have this story related to us. This woman was a gentile. She had a demon-possessed daughter. Jesus Christ, as King of the Jews, had come to minister to the Jewish people. This woman, as a gentile, had no claims upon Him whatsoever. How is he going to treat this woman who is completely outside of the Commonwealth of Israel?

"For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him and came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek (a gentile), a Syrophenician by nation. She besought Him that He would cast forth the demon out of her daughter. And Jesus said, 'Let the children first be filled (meaning the Jewish people), for it is not right to take the children's bread (the Jewish people's bread) and to cast it unto the dogs.'"

Our study of the doctrine of dogs, you remember, identified this as a contemptuous word which was used by Jews to identify gentiles. They were dogs.

"She answered and said unto Him, 'Yes, Lord. Yet the dogs (and here are the puppies) under the table eat of the children's crumbs.'" The little pet dogs get to eat the children's crumbs that fall.

"And He said unto her, 'For this saying, go your way. The demon is gone out of your daughter.' And when she was come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying upon the bed." She was no longer in convulsions; no longer screaming; and, no longer foaming at the mouth. This woman had no claims upon Jesus Christ at all because she was a gentile, and He had come as minister to fulfill the covenant to the Jews. Yet she was a woman who reached out again to Jesus Christ, and He reached out and tenderly met her need.

Women thus were not hindered in their approach to Jesus Christ because of their gender, or even because of their nationality or race. Contact with the Lord Jesus Christ is not a man's world. Contact in-depth with Jesus Christ is not a man's prerogative.

Jesus also had a high regard for the intellectual potential of women. Many men today do not, and they are mistaken. If you're going to marry a woman, you want to kind of check out her IQ. You shouldn't marry a woman smarter than you are. You'll have all kinds of miseries. However, if she really is a woman with a high IQ, she'll know how to hide it, so she'll trick you. So you're done for either way, gentlemen. But in any case, when the Lord Jesus Christ looked at a woman, He didn't consider her just a dumb blond. He considered her something of great intellectual potential.

The Jewish rabbis did not have this attitude. The Jewish rabbis refused to educate girls. They would educate boys considerably. They would teach girls a little bit, and then they would cut the girls off. They deliberately left girls in an inferior position academically. The reason for this is because the rabbis considered that women were all by birth on the lower scale of the IQ rating.

The Lord Jesus Christ, however, was quite noted for the fact that when He taught publicly, He included women in His teaching. For example, in Matthew 14:21, we have the story of the feeding of the 5,000. The summary verse says, "And they who had eaten were about 5,000 men besides women and children." When Jesus was teaching that large mob, he didn't say, "I want to speak to you men. Would you men gather over here? We're going to have a little men's breakfast here of fish and bread. I'm going to teach you and explain some things to you." But He talked to the group, and the women were in the group, and He taught them with the full understanding that they were capable of learning what He had to say in spiritual things.

The Lord Jesus Christ was also ready to teach women privately. In John 4:1-42, we have the famous story of the woman at the well whom Jesus taught on that occasion. You will notice, beginning at verse 27, that His disciples were amazed that He should take time privately to be teaching a woman one-on-one. The disciples had picked up the attitude of the rabbis that women were stupid. Here He is, taking His time just to teach a woman:

"And upon this came His disciples and marveled that He talked with a woman. Yet no man said, 'What do you seek, or why do you talk with her.' The woman then left her water pot." She had come to the well to fill the pot. "And went her way into the city and said to the men." Notice she had learned what Jesus taught her, and learned it well. "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"

This woman took in the information. She was able to process it intellectually, and she was able to come to a major conclusion that many of the men of Israel never were able to come to, namely that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, and was the Christ who had come to fulfill the Davidic and the Palestinian and the New Covenants. Jesus saw her personally. He respected the capacity of women.

He also did this on the occasion when visiting Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. In Luke 10:38, we read, "Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." She's in the house. Mary is sitting on the floor at the feet of Jesus, listening to Jesus explain doctrine to her. Martha goes about preparing supper first.

Verse 40: "But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, 'Lord don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.'" Martha said, "Women belong in the kitchen. Would you tell Mary to get in here where she belongs? Women don't belong in school. Women don't belong in a classroom."

"And Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful. Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.'" He was saying, "Long after the food and the benefit of that food that you prepared, Martha (as good a cook as you are), has come and gone, what Mary has received from me, she will keep." How? Because He was talking to her mind. He was talking to the intellect of a woman. A woman's intellect needs Bible doctrine even more than a man's intellect does in respect to control of emotion. A woman's natural inclination is to respond from emotion. Unless her mind is filled with divine viewpoint principles, she will make a fool of herself. She will injure herself. She will injure all those about her unless her thinking is controlled by the Word of God. Her emotions will be poisoned by sin.

So Jesus was definitely concerned for the spiritual education of women, and He indicated their full capacity to secure the mind of Christ when they were taught. A woman minus bible doctrine lacks the basis, really, for femininity. That's what makes a woman feminine. That's what transforms her from being a male. It is her capacity to respond to her gender because she has the Word of God within her.

Now, there are dumb women. There are women who have high IQs who are dumb women. Women with high IQs, minus doctrine, are stupid women. So the Lord Jesus respected the intellectual capacity of women, and He knew that that could only realize its full potential as they were taught divine viewpoint principles.

Jesus often used illustrations in His teachings, as you know. It is significant that he regularly used women in his illustrations as well as men. For example, in Luke 13:18-21, we have the story of the mustard seed and leaven: "Then He said, 'What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and cast into his garden. And it grew and became a great tree, and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.'" That little parable illustrates the growth of organized Christianity.

Then in verse 20, He reverses the illustration to a woman, "And said again, 'To what shall I liken the Kingdom of God (that is, the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ ruling on this earth)? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.'"

In Luke 15:8 we have another illustration of using women to convey spiritual truth: "Either what woman, having 10 pieces of silver, if she lose one piece does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it? When she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I found the peace which I had lost.' Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Here we have a woman who finds a piece of money that she has lost, and she holds a party to rejoice over it.

In Luke 18:1-5, we have a man who is the judge, and a woman who is the plaintiff: "And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, saying, 'There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. There was a widow in that city. She came unto him saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. He would not for a while. But afterward, he said within himself, Though, I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she weary me.'"

**Success in Life**

Here Jesus is illustrating, with a man and a woman, persistence in prayer for the vision that God gives you. Whatever vision God gives you in any area of life, remember, will only be realized through the grace of God, and the grace of God will only function through prayer. So we're back to what is success in life. Success in life is taking in the Word of God; functioning on it; and, being positive to it. This is the very thing that, way back in the book of Joshua, Joshua make clear to the people of Israel, that if they would obey the commandments of God, they would enjoy good success. And that means whatever you want to do in life; whatever profession you're in; whatever goal you're in; or, whatever human relationships you enter into, the success in those areas only comes ultimately and fully and completely as you take in the Word of God, and as you operate on it. So here's the example where Jesus is illustrating the importance of the persistence of prayer, and He uses a woman to illustrate. This woman finds that persistence pays off.

In Matthew 6:28, we have again this interchange of using men and women to illustrate spiritual things: "Why are you anxious for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not (which is what a man does), neither do they spin (which is what a woman does)." Here, within one verse, Jesus keeps interchanging to illustrate spiritual things, using men, and using women. He does not neglect the fact that women reflect spiritual truths.

In Matthew 24:40-41, we have that again: "Then shall two (that is, two men) be in the field. One shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill. The one shall be taken, and the other left." Men work in the field. Women do the grinding. So Jesus used women, as well as men, to illustrate doctrinal principles.

**Money**

Jesus also recognized the capacity of women to serve in God's work. We have that splendidly illustrated in Mark 12:41, where we have the illustration of the capacity of women to serve with money. I'll guarantee you there are a lot of men that have never learned how to serve with money. We have the story of the widow who gave everything she had to support the Lord's work: "And Jesus sat opposite the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. There came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing. And he called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, 'Verily, I say unto you this poor widow has cast more in than all they who have cast into the treasury, for all they did cast in their abundance. But she, of her want, did cast in all that she had, even all her living.'"

I think it is significant that here the Lord wants to illustrate that the highest pinnacle of spiritual development and maturity is reflected by people who can give their money liberally to the Lord's work. Now, when he wants to illustrate this key touchstone factor of real spiritual maturity (not mouth maturity, but practicing maturity), He goes to a woman to illustrate this. A woman, when she is oriented to the Word of God, has the capacity for grace giving in a most liberal and astounding manner. Men basically are misers. Men basically are greedy. Men basically want to forever some day in the future do something great for God when they have provided and secured what they need. But when Jesus wants to show giving, and faith in God to take care of you, He doesn't go to a man. He goes to a woman. Men like to be wheeler-dealers. Women know how to cast themselves upon God, and to use what He has given them for His glory.

**Gratitude**

Also, Jesus appreciated the capacity of women to praise God and to express gratitude. In Luke 13:10, we have this illustrated: "And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. Behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity 18 years, and was bowed together, and could in no way lift herself up." She was a cripple. "When Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' He laid his hand on her, and immediately she was made straight." And what did she do? "She glorified God."

The rest of the story is interesting, too. The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, 'There are six days in which men ought to work in them, and therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.'" We see this pompous idiot, and the Lord gets mad about it. Here's one of the places where Jesus Christ really lets loose: "The Lord then answered him and said, 'You hypocrite.'" Mind you, that they're in this house. This is a leading man of the community. All these people are sitting here. A lot of these folks voted him into office. "The Lord said, 'You hypocrite. Does not each one of you on the Sabbath lose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering'?" You take care of your animals on the Sabbath day. "'And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham (notice how he dignifies her as a woman of the commonwealth) whom Satan had bound lo these 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?' And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed." You betcha. "And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him."

So here people were led to honor God and to praise Him because of a woman's response to the tender hand of Jesus Christ upon her physical infirmity. She knew what to do when the Lord had acted for her. She was grateful. Women have the capacity for gratitude, and Jesus recognized that.

**Praise and Worship**

Jesus was twice anointed by women in an act of worship. In Luke 7:36-50, we read about His being anointed by a prostitute. In John 12:1-11, we read about his being anointed by a born again woman, Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus. On both occasions, it was women who had the capacity for this expression of praise and worship.

**Differences in the Ministries of Men and Women**

However, Jesus indicated that the spiritual ministry of women differed from that of men. While both were involved in the ministry, the ministry of women was not the same ministry of men. They had equality of spiritual privilege, but this did not imply identical spiritual activity in God's service. That's where a lot of women make the mistake today – that the identity of their spiritual privilege is equated with identity of spiritual service.

We have this, for example, by the fact that when Jesus chose the 70 to go out two-by-two on that missionary enterprise, he chose only men. He chose no women as missionaries (Luke 10:1). When it came time to choose the 12 apostles upon whom the church would be built, and the spiritual leadership of the church would be structured, He chose 12 men (Luke 6:13-16). He did not choose any women as apostles. When it came time for the disciples to replace Judas, who had fallen from the body of the 12, they did not nominate any women for this office of leadership (Acts 1:23-26).

The Lord's Supper, when it was instituted, was instituted in the presence of men, and was designed by the Lord's command for men to perform. It was men who were to perform the Lord's Supper. Women were to participate in it. But it was men who were to serve the elements, and who were to provide the guidance. Luke 22:14: "And when the hour was come, He sat down with the 12 apostles with Him." There were 12 men there. Then verse 19: "And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.' Likewise also the cup after supper, saying (after the Passover supper), 'This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.'" So here we have, in the presence of 12 men, the institution of the Lord's Supper, and they are the ones who are directed to perform it.

Furthermore, we have an indication that the spiritual service of women is different when we read the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:16-20, missionary enterprise has not been committed to women. Worldwide evangelization has not been committed to women, though women may participate in it as they participated in Paul's missionary activity. It is committed to men: "Then the 11 disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoken to them saying, 'All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go you (men, gathered here before me), therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." So the missionary commission was delivered to men.

Men were used to record the revelation of Scripture. No woman ever wrote one of the books of the Bible.

All of this is based, as we see by 1 Timothy 2:11-14, on the fact that God has a different order between the relationships of authority of men and women. In 1 Timothy 2:11, we read, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I will permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. So the principle here is laid out that spiritual authority resides with men. That's true in church. That's true at home. If that is not the case, then you've got part of the poison again of the Garden of Eden working on human relationships.

Jesus had several relationships to women personally. The Greek word "diakoneo" is the word that means "to serve." We have this in noun forms and in various cognate forms in the gospels. Whenever this word (to serve) is used in relationship to Jesus Christ personally (an act of personal service to Jesus Christ), it is always service that comes to Him either from angels or from women – personal direct service. This word, in the gospels, is always used either of angels ministering to (serving) Him, or of women serving Him. In Matthew 4:11, for example, we have it used of angels: "Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." That is personal direct service to some need of Jesus Christ.

Then we have several times where it refers to women, such as Peter's mother-in-law in Matthew 8:14-15: "When Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she arose and ministered unto Him "(to Jesus personally). This was a woman ministering to Him.

We also have occasions when a whole group of women would minister to Jesus personally. For example, Luke 8:1-3: "And it came to pass afterwards that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. The 12 were with Him, and certain women, who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered onto Him of their substance." These women directly ministered to Jesus Christ in material support.

In Mark 15:40-41, we have another illustration: "And there were also women looking on, afar off, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome, who also, when he was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him, and many other women who came up with Him unto Jerusalem. "So Jesus Christ, in His ministry, was not only directly ministered to by women, but there was a band of serving women who actually followed Him and the apostles, and they provided domestic services for them. They provided care, food, washing of clothes, and financing for the ministry of the Lord. Jesus Christ did not generally use his miraculous power to supply these material needs.

Of course, we've already read about the ministry of Martha in Luke 10:40: "But Martha was cumbered about much serving." Also in John 12:2, there was the considerate tender provision by this woman: "There they made Him a supper, and Martha served. But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him."

So Jesus received material gifts from women believers. They were the source of support for His ministry. The women who served with Jesus had the quality of faithfulness like women do. These women stayed with Him to the end. When the disciples were running like scared rabbits, the gals were standing there staunch and firm. Notice Matthew 27:55: "And many women were there at the cross, beholding afar off, who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him." They had not only been with Him and His entourage as He traveled about teaching, and helping the Lord and His disciples, but when he was hanging on the cross, they were still there.

As a matter of fact, a group of them were actually within talking distance of Jesus on the cross. John 19:25: "There stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciples standing by, whom He loved (that is, John), He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.'" They were that close; that identified; and, that standing by Him in comfort. He whom they had comforted in many ways in providing for His need in the ministry, they now comforted in the moment of His death.

Furthermore, after He was dead, they did not abandon Him. The women stood by him there. In Luke 23:55-56, they followed His body to the tomb to perform the service of embalming Him: "And the women also, who came with Him from Galilee, followed, and beheld a sepulchre, and how His body was laid, and they returned and prepared spices and ointments and rested on the Sabbath day, according to the commandment," intending then the next day to go and to embalm the body, after they had identified where He was laid, and then they went to prepare the materials for the embalming. But as you know, they never got to Him, for after the Sabbath was over and they returned, they found that He had risen from the dead.

And that event, the resurrection, was also first communicated to women. Luke 24:1-3 tell us that the women were the first ones that discovered this monumental important event: "And upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came up to the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared and certain others with them. They found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." The reason the women were the first to find Him was because they were faithful to the end. They continued in the ministry that they felt they had been called to, even to the embalming of His body.

They were the first to announce the fact of His resurrection to the 11. Luke 24:9: "And returned from the sepulchre and told all these things unto the 11 and to the rest." They were the first heralds of the fact that Jesus had risen.

Furthermore, the disciples didn't believe the women. The reaction of the disciples was, "Ah, they're just emotional women. You can't believe them." They didn't believe what they had told them – that Jesus had been raised. When Jesus got back with those 11 men, He rebuked them for the fact that they did not receive truth from women. So if a woman tells you something that is true and that is divine viewpoint, you better believe it, because God holds you just as responsible for that as if it came from some man or from a pastor-teacher.

Mark 16:11: "And they, when they had heard that He was alive (from the woman) and had been seen of her, believed not." Mark 16:14: "Afterward, He appeared (Jesus) onto the 11 as they sat eating, and he abraded them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not those who had seen Him after He had risen." Jesus rebuked these men for not believing the women.

However, while the women were first to discover the resurrection, and while the women were first to announce the resurrection, notice also that the Word of God makes it clear again that spiritual authority and spiritual confirmation of truth in the form of revelation does not come through women. But it, again, comes through the proper order of men in spiritual leadership. For in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7, we have listed eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Yet, strangely enough, not one woman is mentioned: "Then He was seen of Cephas, then of the 12. After that he was seen of over 500 men (brethren) at once, of whom the greater part remain to this present time. But some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James, then, of all the apostles." Women, again, are not used in spiritual authority.

Furthermore, Jesus glorified women in their domestic capacities, as we see through all of this. In contrast to the hatred of the feminist movement toward a woman's role in domestic capacities, this is the thing that God honors a woman for above all else. I don't care what you are as a woman: how talented; how gifted; or, how much of a wage earner you are. All of that is secondary. The thing that God places in highest respect and highest honor upon a woman is the gal who is the good domestic provider. You just go back to Proverbs. You just look through Proverbs 31, where you have that splendid description of God's ideal woman as a wife, and you will discover that the thing that God upholds, first of all, is a woman's domestic capacities.

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, that was very critical to his work. Without them, it would have been very difficult, and His work would have been greatly restricted. The relationship of Jesus Christ to personal services from women was fantastic, and His honor to them knew no bounds. So we will look next time at the ladies in the New Testament church era, and then we'll see some of the distortions and some of the gross twisting of this in our day today. I think you'll have a pretty good impression of the Bible doctrine of women, and the role of happiness for the woman.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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