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Holy Spirit: Women's Rights—P9

“But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike” (Acts 8:12).

The west brought the world the modern idea of equality between men and women—that one is not intrinsically better or greater than the other. It was in the west that women were first educated with men, treated with dignity, and included in self-government, en-mass. Where did the western world get these ideas that women can be equally entrusted with knowledge, duty, and things of importance? It comes from the New Testament.

The Gospel did more to advance women's “rights” than any other movement in history. How? At the time of Christ, the Jews had very strict rules about men and women—men couldn't even talk to women in public without defiling themselves. Yet, to His disciples' surprise, Jesus engaged women in conversation, witnessed to them, ministered to them, and accepted them as disciples: *“At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why do You speak with her?’”* (Jn. 4:27)

The first commissioned missionary to a foreign people was the Samaritan woman—entrusted by Jesus to evangelize about Him to the men of her city: *“So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, ‘Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?’ They went out of the city, and were coming to Him”* (Jn. 4:28-30). When He rose from the dead, Jesus entrusted the greatest news in human history to women and commanded them to bear their eyewitness account and His greeting to the male disciples. The men did not believe them—probably because under rabbinical law, women were not considered faithful witnesses to deliver testimony, but

“afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves...and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen” (Mk. 16:14).

Later, when Paul took the Gospel to the Gentiles, God opened the heart of a woman named Lydia to become the first disciple in Europe, and she aided and helped the Apostles in their work (Acts 16:13-14). In the early Church, women were taught alongside men, and they prophesied, spoke in tongues, evangelized, and prayed with the men. And it is likely because of women's equal status in the Great Commission that Paul (before his conversion) specifically targeted women for arrest alongside men (Acts 9:2).

Why? Jesus emphasized that a person's value and standing before God had nothing to do with their sex—that men were not intrinsically “better” than women and that women were not intrinsically “better” than men, which is why the New Testament stresses, “men and women ALIKE.” This was almost unheard of in the ancient world, including the Greek and Roman Empires where girls were often exposed to the elements at birth as sex-selective abortion. This New Testament legacy of liberty and of women's equality in the Great Commission and their inclusion in education, prophecy, prayer, and participation in Church is the foundation that changed the way the world treated and viewed women.

Unfortunately, many feminists today use their Christian freedom to advocate policies that undermine the Gospel and harm men to supposedly “elevate” women. They believe women deserve to be blessed more than men. But Jesus said, *“On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it”* (Lk. 11:28) - regardless of their sex. Harming men to seemingly “advance” women is also evil. May we cease striving against one another and acknowledge the good God has done in the world through His Son to break down enmity and heal past harm. Even so, Amen.

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