

The Role of Women in Scripture

One of the exciting topics of Bible study today is not because the topic is a Biblical topic but the excitement is caused by the contemporary culture.

In our world today women are wanting something- that something seems to change from culture to culture, except that each woman seems to want change-

A change that is most often seen as being the result of contemporary enlightenment-

and in Christian background-cultures that which is being cast off is often felt to be a lack of freedom for a woman to develop according to her abilities.

Which lack of freedom is seen as having it's feet in the Biblical teaching regarding a woman's role in life on this earth after the fall of Genesis 3.

Women- even educated women- often seem to see the plan of salvation as requiring them to see themselves as lacking something.

THE FASCINATING QUESTION IS THEREFORE---
IN SCRIPTURE DO WOMEN LACK ANYTHING BY NATURE?

If so, what is it?

It is immediately obvious that we are going to need to look at some Bible passages making statements about women- and as you are aware there are some great ones!!!

BUT MOST OFTEN MISREAD- PERHAPS

So let's start.

1. GIRLS ARE WORTH ½ AS MUCH AS MEN- in the Bible

In Leviticus 27 the redemption price for a female is half the redemption price for a male. Therefore one can conclude that in Scripture girl's are worth ½ as much as men!!

The word redeem is the word used to represent the transaction that is done to free from penalty. The redemption price is set by the amount of indebtedness that is attached to that which is needing redemption--

Therefore the lower redemption price shows the lesser amount of indebtedness, or in the story of Scripture, the lesser amount of guilt.

Eve was deceived Adam was not- Adam chose not to obey God knowing the decision he was making; therefore his indebtedness is shown to be twice as great as the females, by our text.

THEREFORE OUR TEXTS IN LEVITICUS DOES NOT SHOW WOMEN TO BE ½ THE VALUE OF MEN, BUT THEY DO SHOW THEM TO BEAR HALF THE AMOUNT OF GUILT THE LORD ATTACHES TO A MAN.

2. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT GIRLS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO INHERIT.

This is a commonly asserted concept which all children who go to Sabbath School know to be incorrect.

One of the first stories that the children learn is the story of Ruth. In this story the center axis is the selling of a piece of property by Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi.

If women do not inherit in the Old Testament times then Naomi would not have been able to be selling a piece of property which she had inherited, and which was being offered according to the rules of inheritance.

THEREFORE why the commonly held concept that women were not allowed to inherit in that time?

Numbers 27:8-11

In this passage is set forth the sequence in the right to inherit:

If a man die and has no son- the inheritance goes to the daughter v.8

If a man die and he has no daughter- the inheritance goes to his brethren v.9

If a man die and he has no brethren then the inheritance goes to his father's brethren v.10

If a man die and his father has no brethren, then the inheritance goes to his kinsman that is next to him of his family v.11

SOOO! The girls get one chance to inherit!! MAYBE!!!

Deuteronomy 15:12

And if your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman....

This text states that a brother is either a man or a woman.

With these texts it is clear that girls inherited at every level of the rules of inheritance.

3. MALES ARE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD- girls are probably in the image of Adam.

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 5: 1,2

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them and called their name Adam in the day when they were created.

That Adam was made in the image of God is seen by everyone, but that the text says that Adam was the name given to both Adam and Eve is apparently not often noticed. In these texts the man is in the image of God; in these texts the woman is in the image of God.

THEREFORE IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT WOMEN SHOULD INHERIT AT EACH LEVEL OF THE RULES OF INHERITANCE ALONG WITH MEN, in the Bible, FOR THEY ARE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD AS IS ADAM, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE PRESENTED AS SEPARATE FROM BEING A MALE.

4. GIRLS SHALL BE SAVED IN CHILDBEARING

1Timothy 2:15 (vv.14,15)

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

The message of this verse appears to be clear and obvious: women shall be saved (taken to heaven) if they have children, if they remain in faith, and love, and sanctification, and sobriety.

The implication is clear; those women who do not have children are not going to be saved.

The foregoing message and implication is so clear that one can scarcely imagine suggesting the message set forth is inappropriate, but there is cause for concern.

When Scripture teaches the possibility of salvation it presents that possibility as based in two things; the acts of God, the objective atonement, and the response of those for whom God acts, the subjective atonement. The objective atonement is always presented in the New Testament as an accomplished fact; at the cross it is finished.

The subjective atonement however is not finished while God calls people to repentance and someone somewhere answers. It is true that people sometimes stop listening, or God stops calling, before people die, but if that does not happen the subjective atonement lasts until people die. Or, until God stops calling to anybody—an event generally known as the close of probation.

The relevance of these comments to our text is to be found in the fact that none of the recorded invitations by God extended to people to take advantage of the offered salvation, and none of the threatenings that are made regarding what will happen to those who reject salvation, are in Scripture in any way tied to the gender of the people hearing or responding. There is only one way of salvation presented; there are not two ways, depending on one's sex—except in our text. Could it be our text needs to be read more carefully? (The translation on which our opening comments were made is reliable.) Let's look at the text again.

One thing is immediately obvious- in verse 15, in the second clause, which reads in part, "if they remain in the faith," etc., the "they" has no linguistic antecedent. It is generally assumed to refer to "she", the one who will be saved through child bearing if she meets some other requirements listed in our clause.

But what if "they" does not refer to "she"? What if it has not only no expressed antecedent, linguistically, but what if it has no antecedent expressed in our passage? What implied antecedent would "they" have?

It seems to me that the answer is suddenly obvious- "they" follows "childbearing," an abstract noun- verb, or gerund- without number- that is to say, it does not show whether it is singular, or plural, feminine or masculine. "They" therefore refers to the specifically listed activities implied results- children!

Now our text sounds like a Christian text; mothers whose children "remain in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety" "will be saved."

That which saves the woman who bears a child is the faithfulness which produces faithful children, for this faithfulness, plus obedience to the counsels of verses preceding verse 13, show this woman is not unfaithful or deceived as was Eve; therefore she has not like Eve, "being deceived, in transgression has become."

Obedience or disobedience determines our eternal destiny.

The man who neglected the hurt man in the good Samaritan story could pray pious prayers and sound good but he could not deceive anyone when revelation was by works. A mother's work's results show whether she is following Eve or God. In one way or another we all must demonstrate the truth of our professed faith in God. In this verse a mother's faith is demonstrated by her children.

5. 1 Timothy 2: 11,12

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection; but I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to exercise authority of a man, but to be in silence.

The English “let learn” has the straight forward meaning learn, or let learn, in the imperative. It is commanded here- Women are to be allowed to learn

The word woman is the normal word for an adult woman.
(These comments are from the Greek Dictionary- Arndt and Gingrich).

The English word “silence” is from *hasuchia*, which has a #1 dictionary meaning of quietness, or rest, and may also mean silent or silence- being quiet (A&G p.350). It can designate tranquility.

In the phrase “in all subjection” the word means subjection, subordination, or obedience.

(This word is very interesting and will be studied from it’s appearance in 1Peter 3:1, 2, where it appears in a context, and from the same Dictionary word as here in 1Timothy.)

The 2 Greek words, one translated “teach”, and the other translated “exercise authority”, are both present tense infinitives followed by a genitive case.

The phrase “nor to exercise authority of a man” is a possessive genitive and means the authority belonging to a man.

[NOTE: If one were to put this verse into a contemporary environment it might read like- I forbid a girl to be driving (everybody knows what horrible drivers they are, and therefore such a rule would be easily understood;) and swimming (everybody knows how questionable those swim suits are), and then thinking of that interview on the T.V. between Michael Phelps and the media person when Michael Phelps said he would not return to swimming because he did not want to return to staring at a black line on the bottom of the pool 4 hours a day, and remembering the function of the line as keeping him from swimming in the wrong lane, one would add to the prohibitions listed in our contemporary version, “in the wrong lane.”

The addition of the words “in the wrong lane” would immediately change the anticipated message; it would change from a prohibition against girls driving and swimming to a prohibition against girls driving and swimming in the wrong lane.

Our Bible verse has this same type of qualifying phrase which changes the verse from a prohibition against 2 activities to a prohibition against a quality of activity.

As such the verse reads, “I do not allow a woman to be teaching-instructing (present continuous), nor domineering (something or someone) with the authority belonging to a man.

{For the base of these NOTE comments see Arndt and Gingrich }

“The inward adorning, the grace of meekness, a spirit in harmony with the heavenly angels, will not lessen true dignity of character or make us less lovely here in this world.” Lift Him Up, p.308. (Oct. 18)

“Where meekness exists, the natural tendencies are under the control of the Holy Spirit.... Meekness will not allow passion to take the lines.”
From The Heart, p.188 (June 25).

“The Majesty of heaven humbled Himself from the highest authority.... His humility did not consist in a low estimate of His own character and qualifications, but in humbling Himself to fallen humanity, in order to raise them with Him to a higher life....”

From the Heart, p.132 (April 30).

In these verses the silence is the voice of that authority belonging to a man.

(Note that the next word is “for”, which of course means that the reason for these counsels is now to be given. See below under 1 Timothy 2: 13-15)

6. 1 Peter 3:1,2

Likewise wives, submitting yourselves to the own husbands, in order that even if any disobey the word, through the conduct of wives without a word they will be gained, observing the pure conduct of you in fear.

The submission 1 Peter 3:1,2 sets forth is required of a wife, whether or not the husband is a Bible-obeying husband.

The problems attaching to such a concept in today’s world are so great that one must study more!

The Greek word translated be in subjection, or be submitting, in 1Peter 3:1,5; and 2:18, is a participle form coming from hupotasso.

Tasso means to place or station a person or thing in a fixed spot- to appoint or establish in an office (Arndt and Gingrich).

Hupo designates an agent and translates “by”, or it designates a place to answer a “where” question, and is translated “under” or “below”.

This sounds like a great concept to every man! The woman, his wife, is commanded by Scripture to be placed in a fixed position beneath the position which her husband holds! Great doctrine! Except that it does not sound like the rest of Scriptures teaching. Perhaps we should finish examining this Greek word.

The word hypotassomenai which appears in 3:1,5 is a nominative, plural, feminine, present, middle, participle. (This same form in masculine appears in 2:18.)

That word middle is bad news for us men. If the form were active it would read like, I am washing the car; if it were passive it would read like, the car is being washed; but being middle the form is reflexive action, and therefore reads like, the car is washing itself. The middle voice signifies the action is being done by one to oneself. Too bad for us men. We are not to make our wives be submissive.

The Bible passage here being examined teaches women they are to place themselves in a fixed position of submission to their husband. The husband is not involved in this activity- the voice is middle. This is a work the wife is commanded by God to be doing on herself- the significance of the middle voice. The wife here has a work assigned to her by God which she can't neglect without being in rebellion against God; rather than against her husband.

This same concept appears in 2:13 in the imperative (command) mode in passive voice to "all", for the reason that God may be seen as good (2:15).

We perhaps should add that in Ephesians 6:1 and in Colossians 3:20 children are, in English, commanded to obey their parents; making the position of the wife to the husband the same as the obedience required of a child- however immature- to it's parents! Another great text for men! Only the Greek word translated obey in these verses is different than the word instructing wives to obey their husbands. The wife is not treated as a child in Scripture.

Children obey your parents is translated from hupekouete, meaning, "listen to". This word appears in the New Testament in this form 5 times and never is addressed to wives; it is rather addressed to slaves twice,(Eph.6:5; Col. 3:22),and to children twice (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20). Wives in Scripture are never classed with slaves or children;¹ their work is not to listen, their work is to win

¹ In 1 Peter 2:18 house servants are told to be submitting themselves to their masters- the same concept as in 3:1 linguistically. But the reason is different. The wife in 3:1 is to be submitting to win her husband to Christ, while the servant in 2:18 is to be submitting because God will respond by blessing the servant (cf vv. 19-21a).

That which the wife and the servant have in common is that they are, if obedient to their instruction, both following the will of God for them.

people (their husbands) to Christ. But I am running ahead! Sarah, however, is said to have listened carefully to Abraham (hupekousen), 1 Peter 3:6.

As noted, the wife's submission to the husband is for the purpose of winning the husband to Christ, even if some of the husbands are disobedient to the Word, by the wife's behavior, not by her words.

Note: The implied of what is stated in verse 1 is very interesting to this writer. If the wife's submission to the husband is of such a nature as to result in causing him to do evil and thereby be separated from the Lord, that submission is a violation of her commission- to be in submission in order to win him to Christ.

The assignment of such accountability is, in the eyes of this researcher, the result of great trust. It is more difficult to live the Christian life than to talk it. Such a role is never in Scripture assigned, to my knowledge, to children, slaves or friends- nor to husbands. God had great trust in woman when He said to her, your job is to save your husband, not with a rod or words, but with gentle service.

7. 1 Timothy 2: 13-15

For Adam first was formed, then Eve.
And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived in transgression has become.
but she will be saved through the childbearing, if they remain in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.

The reason that Paul starts verse 13 with "for" is to make clear that the counsels of the verses preceding verse 13 are going to be explained- after the "for". "For" at the beginning of verse 13 means that verse 13 shows the cause or reason for what preceded it.

The message of verses 13 and 14 is that Adam is "first" because he was formed first (the significance of this is not clear to me right now), and that Adam was not deceived (and did not enter into transgression by way of deception), but the woman (same word as in verse 11) being deceived in transgression has become.

When Paul hooks these statements to the verses preceding verse 13 by the word "for" the message is that the restrictions set forth for a woman in verses 11 and 12 have their cause in the statements (history) appearing in verses 13 and 14.

The implied message is that a woman's role as set forth in this passage is not due to her being defective or second class, but it is because of the roll of Eve in the events known to us as the fall of man. (In another passage Paul will talk about the fall of man and the results accruing to males.)

“Eve was told of the sorrow and pain that must henceforth be her portion. And the Lord said, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God- in harmony with His great law of love- they would have ever been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband.”

Note: In the Bible God says that His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give us an expected end. Therefore it is apparent that God’s counsels to women are based in redeeming love, and not in revenge- as are His counsels to males; expressions of loving hedging-up to an object of His love.

8. 1 Peter 3:7

Husbands likewise, dwelling together according to knowledge as with a weaker vessel the female, assigning honor as indeed co-heirs of (the) grace of life, for the not to be hindered the prayers of you.

“Likewise” means that the principles set forth in 1 Peter 2:9, 11-25 to which wives were directed in 3:1, and the principles of conduct presented to wives in 3:1-6, are to be practiced by husbands.

“as with a weaker vessel the female”, weaker being asthenes, which can mean economically weak, without influence, weak in faith, feeble, or physically weak, etc.

Whereas Peter designates wives as fellow-heirs of grace, who must be properly treated by the husband if the husbands prayers are not to be being interrupted (present passive infinitive), the phrase “as with a weaker vessel, since she is a female” means that the fact that a woman is physically weaker than a man is not to be understood by the husband as implying that she is less valuable than a man in God’s sight, and it is therefore okay to treat her as if she were of less value than a man.

The fact that she is called a co-heir of the grace of life by Peter signifies that whatever man’s position in regard to the grace of life is understood to be, her position in regard to the grace of life is the same.

It is now clear that the significance of the phrase “so that your prayers may not be hindered” means that husband’s who don’t treat their wives as equal heirs of the grace of life are people whose prayers God won’t listen to.

Here the one who is weaker than the man physically has the power with God that blocks his prayers- if he mistreats her.

SUMMARY:

I. The start of this study included a question- In Scripture do women lack anything by nature? and if so what is it?

The answer to these questions is now apparent-

By nature women lack the qualities of character which are the part of God’s character which He put in men, just as men lack those qualities of God’s character which are the part of God’s character that He put in girls.

Both men and women are in the image of God, and, whereas God has no defective or second-class character qualities, it is apparent that though women and men reflect different qualities of God’s character, those differences can not be seen as indicating defectiveness or a second class citizen.

(It is also obvious that in the case of marriage, which we did not study, the long association-producing influences, which alter both partners, result in the man and woman each being more in the image of God, by virtue of their assimilation of some of the other genders’ character qualities, than they would have been without assimilating those qualities which at the creation were placed in the opposite gender.)

II. But what did God say at the time of the fall in Genesis 3?

Genesis 3:16-19: Your husband shall reign over you.

We all know that Jesus would die for 1 male, but it sometimes appears that we do not recognize the Jesus would have died for 1 woman.

If it is to be accepted as true, that Jesus would have died for just 1 woman, what is to be understood as the message of the words just presented to the reader from Genesis 3? (Remember that great text which says, I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.)

At the fall the Lord said that feminineness, in the presence of evil has it’s best opportunity to overcome following these guidelines, just as He said to the man, maleness, in the presence of evil, following the guidelines given to them, has it’s best chance to

overcome: follow these guidelines- same salvation for both, but different roles or acts of cooperation to be expressed toward God.

The plan of salvation shows the pronouncements made to the genders regarding their futures was based in love not revenge. The descriptive work assigned is always based in the redeeming love of God- for both men and women. Both men and women are to follow the directions given to them in God's Word, the Bible.

“The Lord is exact and infallible in His comprehension. He understands the working of the human mind, the active principles of the human agents He has formed, just how they will be moved upon by the objects that come before them, and in what manner they will act under every temptation that can try them and in every circumstance in which they are placed. Lift Him Up, p.323 (November 5).

(To be an Elder one must meet several criteria, one of which is to be a husband, 1Tim. 3:2. The word translated husband is andra, which is the accusative of anar, the Greek word for male. Arndt and Gingrich's dictionary of New Testament Greek lists this word as meaning male, with the #1 definition being, “in contrast to woman”.)

III. a. Women can:

Increase a male's value in the sight of God by sharing her nature with him; by causing him to reflect more than male qualities

She can block her husband's prayers

Can win him to the Lord without a word- something a man in Scripture is never presented as being commissioned to do; such a commission is to this writer a result of great trust by God.

Guarantee her own salvation by raising children who are true to the Lord

Can reveal God's nature (character) as man can't

b. Women can't

Assume the authority assigned to a male

Assume the functions of a man, because she has the wrong nature (imago Dei)

CONCLUSION:

The revelation of Christian character given by a woman is different than the revelation of Christ's character given by a man. Her contribution is due to her nature. A woman can be trusted (Proverbs 31:10-28) because God is like that. The work of both genders is necessary for the presentation of the Lord's character to the world.