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SHALL THE WOMEN PREACH?

By William Baxter Godbey

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SHALL THE WOMEN PREACH?

Yes. By this we don't mean the modern theological, metaphysical, scientific, sermonic preaching so common in our pulpits. It is unknown in the Bible, and a great pity it ever became known in the church. It has been for ages, and is today, a millstone around the neck of the church, dragging her down to the present awful apostasy. God help the men out of that awful hell-trap, and forbid the women should ever be caught in it. I thank God, so far I have never known a woman caught in that trap.

But, sad to say, many a noble man has there fought, bled and died. So don't mistake us. We don't mean for the women to do what you call preaching; we are sorry the men are doing it. We want them to quit, and the women never to begin. But we do know that it is the God-given right, blood-bought privilege, and bounden duty of the women, as well as the men, to preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. 1 Peter, 1:12. This is what we mean when we say, let the women preach. God wants to save, sanctify, fill with the Holy Ghost, and arm with a tongue of fire, every man, woman and child, and send them out to conquer the world for his Son, whom He promised long ages ago: "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The ends of the earth are upon us, the Lord delayeth his coming because of our tardiness; the world's redemption is overdue; Satan has had it far too long; it is high time for the Apocalyptic angel to come down and chain him, cast him out, and lock him up in hell, and usher in the millennium.

Eighteen hundred and sixty-eight years ago, our Lord positively commanded us: Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." It is a burning shame on the escutcheon of the church that there are more unevangelized heathens today than when the commission was given.

A thousand millions of heathens, two hundred million of Muhammadans and Jews, and three hundred millions of Roman and Greek Catholics, besides millions of poor, dead Protestants and wicked gospel-hardened sinners under Protestant influence, are clamorous for the Bread of Life. Old, dark Africa is being penetrated with railroads from ocean to ocean. Thousands of Ethiopian kings, amid their wailing subjects, are stretching out their hands and pleading for men and women to come and tell them of Jesus.

Old Asia, the cradle of humanity, with her time-honored heathen empires, amid vain philosophies and pagan orgies, has waited six thousand years for deliverance. The light is now breaking from every shore and inter-penetrating the dark interior. She is rocking like a volcano, impatient of the tardy progress of the long expected redemption. South America, Central America and Mexico are now revolutionizing against the intolerable despotism of papal priestcraft, and everywhere pleading for missionaries to come and teach them the way of salvation. Millions of angels would gladly volunteer and take the place God offers poorest saint who will dare to enter the open door, and receive a crown that will outshine the stars.

Amid this universal cry, I am glad not a church in Christendom is found mean enough to say no to the women. All the churches on the globe indorse women preaching by sending them to preach to the heathens. Where is the church that has not her women this day in the heathenfield? "Brother Godbey, my church doesn't allow the women to preach." You are mistaken; your church has already sent out women to preach to the heathens over the sea, and you ought to be preaching to the heathens at home.

Psa. 68:11 reads in the inspired Hebrew, as corroborated by Dr. Clarke and the revised version: "The Lord gave the word, and great was the army of those women that preached it." This is a prophetic vision setting forth the glorious evangelism of the latter days, in which great armies of women such as General Booth's Salvation Army, in which five thousand women are preaching this day, shall sweep out, preach the gospel to all nations, and bring on the millennium. Rev. 25:16, prophesies the battle of Armageddon, the great final conflict which shall signally defeat Anti-christ, dethrone him forever, and prepare the way for the millennium. This wonderful Armageddon in which the hosts of God are to defeat the devil and bring on the millennium, is taken from Judges 5:19, where Deborah, a mother in Israel, marshaled and led the hosts of God, and Jael, a brave young, Christian woman, with her own heroic hands slew Sisera, the commander-in-chief of king Jabin's army, and the greatest military chieftain on the globe. He was much such a man as Napoleon Bonaparte. Though the women led the war which brought deliverance to all Israel, the men fought by their side. According to these prophecies, this is the war that is to conquer the world, chain the devil (Rev. 20:1) and send him to hell where he belongs, bring on the millennium and reinstate King Jesus on the throne of the world to reign forever. And it is going to be done; the Bible, God, angels, and saints say "Amen!" Who says "No"? The devil howls it from hell, and poor, stereotyped, dark-age theologians who know the

women will beat them preaching if they get a half a chance, howl it from gilded pulpits and cushioned tripods: "No! don't let the women preach, they will ruin everything."

Are the women included in the commission? Certainly. Read it for yourself. Acts 2:17-18. The commission had been given in an incipient form, and restricted to the Jews.

Now amid the splendors of Pentecostal glory, it is given in its final evangelical and unencumbered form, and you see it not only includes our daughters alone, with our sons, but it takes in our servant women. I am glad the Lord is raising up so many witnesses to this truth. Hannah Smith is certainly one of the greatest white preachers in the world, while Amanda Smith; born in Southern slavery and still so illiterate, she speaks the darkey dialect, is to-day the world's model of pulpit oratory. She has preached in America, Europe, Asia and Africa, everywhere holding spellbound the multitude regardless of culture, rank or nationality.

The word here is prophesy.

Does it mean preach? It means preach, exhort, pray, testify, appeal, and everything else you can do with your tongue for the Lord. I Cor. 14:3. "The one who prophesieth speaketh unto human beings, edification, exhortation and comfort." So you see the word used in the commission and generally used in the Bible means to talk for the Lord any way you will.

This technical, sermonic, steel-ribbed, ironbound, iceberg stuff you call preaching is the devil's counterfeit to freeze and ritualize the church to death and send the world to hell. No, I don't mean that the women are to do that. For I want all the men to quit it and the women never to begin. Now don't forget that what the Bible means simply to get, emptied of sin and filled with the Spirit so you will run over the balance of your life, with your pentecostal tongue of fire loose at both ends, reading the Word, expounding it, exhorting, testifying, praying, shouting, etc., as free for Jesus as a bird of paradise.

"Brother Godbey, I thought the preachers constituted an order distinct from and superior to the laity." If you mean the elders or bishops (which we mean the same office) whom the church ordains to take the pastoral charge of the Lord's flock, and the deacons whom they ordain to attend to the temporal interest of the churches, we have no controversy. And I don't care a picayune whether you ordain a solitary woman or not. Perhaps we would better show our sisters courtesy by relieving them of pastoral charges and temporal burdens, unless it be in the foreign field where a lonely woman may be (as is now in some of Bishop Taylor's work) the only chance to look after, preach, baptize and sacrament the people. In that case let her be ordained like Sister Phebe of the church at Cenchrea.

But what about the ministry as a separate and distinct order in bygone ages?

It was so under the law, but not under the gospel. In the former dispensation the people stood without, the priests in the sanctuary, and the high priest in the sanctuary, and the high priest in the Sanctum sanctorum. When the plan of salvation was perfected by the crucifixion of Christ, God with His own hand tore down the veil and invited all his people right into the Sanctum sanctorum. Thus the Aaronic priesthood was forever superseded by that of Melchizedek. "Without father or

mother," without special distinction neither male nor female. So you see when the Holy Ghost dispensation came in, the priesthood was transferred to the membership of the gospel church in which we are all called to preach with diversities of gifts. I Cor. 12. Justification makes us priests and sanctification makes us high-priests. I Peter 2:5-9 and Rev. 1:6.

Hence all this pomp and pageantry of priestly orders in the gospel church is Satan's buncombe, not a vestige of truth in it. On that Satanic heresy, proud hierarchies have risen, trodden down people beneath the iron heels of their cruel despotism and cursed, ritualized, debauched and diabolized the church the last fifteen hundred years. It is a trick of the devil so transparent, that I am only astonished the people have tolerated it so long. The degradation and disfranchisement of the sisterhood are some of the bitter fruits of that heresy.

God's word positively assures us that sanctification makes us not only priests but royal, that is, high priests unto God. This is the crowning glory of the gospel dispensation that we not only gain the spiritual eminence of the Aaronic priesthood, but are all invited to walk right in through the rent veil into the Holy of Holies and there abide, amid the unutterable glories of the shekinah, feasting on the hidden manna in the golden pot while Aaron's rod, all the time adorned with blooming flowers, growing and ripening fruits, is the constant memento of our wonderful growth in grace. But does that include the Women? It includes the entire membership of God's church. This fact, so well authenticated in the Word of God, sweeps from the field the last vestige of cavil as to the women preaching. Did not the high priest have a right to preach? Why, he was the tiptop of the ministry. So, woman, get sanctified, and you are not only a preacher, but you stand at the very top of the ministry. Let devils howl and "dry-bone" preachers croak, and still is so. Now, women, what more do you want? They will not give me license. Go and preach along with the Apostles, for not one of them ever got license. Jesus himself had none. The church he belonged to, instead of giving him license, put him to death. The servant is not above his Lord. You go and do likewise. What would you think of the high priest putting on a long face and holding back for license, when his office put him amid the glories of an ever-present Jehovah, a million of miles above all license. Oh, women, quit bothering your dead church about license. Go and preach like lightning till the stars fall.

"Brother Godbey, did the women preach side by side with the Apostles?" They certainly did.

In Paul's letter to Romans we find seven women preachers in fifteen verses, Rom. 16:1-15. Sister Phebe a "deacon" of the church of Cenchrea. In Methodism, the deacons are all ordained preachers of the gospel. So you see I prove by Paul that she was a preacher and by the Methodist church that she was an ordained preacher. Then Priscilla, Mariam, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, the sister of Nereus. Acts 16:13. During Paul's missionary tour in Europe, he enjoyed his first opportunity to preach the gospel to our fathers and mothers in a woman's meeting. Neither was it fortified by Satan's false modesty against the attendance of men. It was free for all. The people of Europe and America ought to be ashamed to say a word against the women preaching, when all that keeps us out of heathen darkness today came in that way. It all started from a woman's meeting. No wonder Paul, writing back to them, Phil. 4:3, remembers "Those women who assisted me in the gospel." Did he mean that they cooked his dinner and washed his clothes? No. He meant just what he said, "that they assisted him in the gospel," i.e., helped him preach. Acts

21:9, tells us about Paul in one of his missionary tours stopping with Philip, the evangelist. Who had been sent out by the Apostles to preach in that country. He had four daughters who prophesied. What do you think they did? Paul tells us, I Cor. 14:3, "They spoke to men edification, exhortation and comfort." Now don't you know that is precisely what the preacher does? If he does not do that he would better quit, and if he does everything else he would better quit. I Cor. 11:5, reveals the women preaching right along there at Corinth. Paul puts it to record with full approval, meanwhile he advises them when they pray and preach to wear something on their heads because it was customary, and in so doing they would avoid unnecessary criticism. But he says in v. 13, that it was not a matter of authority, but a mere suggestion of his that the women put something on their head instead of preaching bare-headed like the men. When you remember that men and women in that country dressed alike, you will at once see the propriety of the woman wearing something on her head to designate her from a man. But the passage shows plainly that to see the woman preaching was a matter of constant observation.

"Brother Godbey, please explain I Cor. 14:34: It is a shame for a woman to speak in church."

It is certain it does not mean that the women shall not pray, testify, exhort, and preach, for we have just learned from the same Apostle in the same letter, that the women, right there, were doing those things. In, vs. 34 and 35, we have an antithesis. It is a well known fact in rhetoric that every antithesis has two co-equal arms. One of these arms is prohibitory, in v. 34, and the other permissive, in v. 35. So now we have the key to the solution of the problem out of which the devil has made so much capital, and hoaxed millions of women into a do-nothing attitude, which has proved a greased plank on which they have slipped into hell. The permission in v. 35 is that of, asking their husbands at home, showing plainly that the prohibition in v. 34 is simply that of asking their husband in church. The Greeks, at that time, were the most learned people in the world, but learning (as it always has been, and is now among heathens) was confined to the men. Now look at the case a moment. They are all on tiptoe with interest to understand this wonderful new gospel. The men, with their learning, have greatly the advantage of the women. No wonder the latter speak to the former in an undertone, "what does he say?" Explain that big katalambanousthi for me." This would produce a promiscuous buzz very confusing to an audience all enthused with interest to catch every word that fell from the speaker's lips. Hence, no wonder Paul corrected them, and told them to wait and ask their husbands at home instead of asking them in the church. A further exegesis we find in the word *lalein* here used. The Greek language has three words used currently for speak: *legien* and *eipien* always mean to speak intelligently and articulately; while *lalein*, though sometimes used in that way, primarily means an articulate sound, such as the humming or buzzing of an insect, and especially the jabbering of infants before, they can speak distinctly. The root of the word is *lal*, from the first effort of a child to talk, saying *lal*, *lal*.

This is a clear case of discipline. Paul is simply correcting disorder. Why did he not correct the men? He did in v. 32, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

Remember that was none of your dead churches. They were not only converted and sanctified, but so endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, I Cor. 12:8-11, that something had to be done to teach them quietude while the word was preached. It is no trouble to keep your

graveyard churches quiet. Dead women don't talk. But when they get flooded with the life of heaven, you don't have to beg them to talk, but when quietude is important it is a common thing for me to have to come out about as plain as Paul. Many a time in red-hot holiness meetings I have found it necessary to quote these verses before I could command the necessary quietude for the poor, unsaved people to hear me with profit.. This Scripture is disciplinary, and easily understood if you will leave it where Paul put it. If you had been with me at Scottsville, Tex., or Indian Springs, Ga., you would have heard me do just what Paul did at Corinth to get a hearing, especially in my Bible-readings.

These Scriptures, as shown by the connection, are not corrections of Satan's people, but of the Lord's, flooded with salvation, and running over while the preacher is trying to preach to the unconverted. I have often been where they would talk and shout, under the impression that they could not help it, till I would turn and read this Scripture to them: The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.' Now, keep your amens and hallelujahs inside, and pray for these sinners while I preach to them. In that way I have commanded quietude till I could preach. I don't know a Scripture in all the Bible by whose perversion the devil has dragged more souls into hell than this. He has not only kept the women from saving others, in consequence of which millions of sinners are' now in hell who would have been saved through the instrumentality of faithful, godly women, if they had done their duty, but millions of women have failed to get saved because they were so scared out by Satan's perversion of this Scripture, that they forfeited their salvation by a failure to pray and confess. Again, it is a significant fact that no woman nor man can keep saved after they get it if they don't keep their tongues loose for God. Whenever they cease to pray and testify, they backslide.

Could you uncap hell, look down and see the multiplied millions of souls which have slidden into the pit on the devil's perversion of this Scripture, you would no longer need this little tract to stir you up to open your mouth for God. John Wesley knew nobody could get religion, nor keep it, without opening the mouth for God and keeping it open. Hence, he made the class-meeting, a most indefatigable mouth-opener, the test of membership in the Methodist church. The day Methodism gave up the class-meeting as a test of membership, Satan wrote Ichabod on her escutcheon. That Hebrew word means, "The glory is departed."

Satan has no conscience. Give him an inch and he will take an ell. Suppose we should give up the right of the woman to preach (which I shall never do), the devil would shove right on and do what he has done all over this country -- tell them they are not to pray or testify. Then they would all go to hell for the want of personal salvation.

The Judgement Day alone will reveal the responsibilities of the preachers in this matter. Thousands of preachers, by their false interpretation of this and other Scriptures, have arbitrarily kept their women from getting and keeping religion enough to keep them out of hell.

Brother Godbey, explain I Tim. 2:11. "I do not permit a woman to teach and usurp authority over her husband." Teach, in this passage, is the same word translated "master" in James 3:1. "Usurp authority over her husband," is explanatory. Paul is simply expounding domestic government, of which man is the constituted head. The church and civil society begin in the family. Hence, the hope of the church and state are forever blighted if home is not a success. So our Lord

has been very good to organize the family on a solid foundation. It must have a head or it could have no organization. Man is that head. But you know full salvation brings in the heaven of perfect love, and sweeps away forever all possible tyranny. Surely our God hath done all things well. I am the head of my family, and my wife is perfectly obedient. Yet she is just as free as if she had no husband. Glory to God in the highest!

In Gal. 3:28, Paul caps the climax and clinches the last nail: "In Him there is neither male nor female." It needs no comment. We enter Christ in regeneration, and are kept and established in Him by sanctification. Farewell old controversy on the woman question, you have wrapped the church in sackcloth and given the devil the world the last fifteen hundred years. Here the ipse dixit of the Almighty, by his servant, Paul, settles you forever. "In Him there is neither male nor female." What does it mean? In the kingdom of grace and glory there is neither male nor female. Hence, we see beyond the possibility of cavil, there is no such a thing as sexual distinction in the kingdom of grace and glory.

When we are born of the Spirit into the Kingdom of God, sexual distinction goes into eternal eclipse, forever perpetuated by sanctification and glorification. Hence, the matter is settled, Satan's trick exposed, and all controversy forever swept from the field. This enfranchisement of the sisterhood is the crowning glory of the present age. When the devil succeeded in sidetracking the church into Antinomianism, i. e., sinning religion, about fifteen hundred years ago, he maneuvered to horn the sisters off the gospel platform. It is astonishing how long he, has kept them horned off. Oh, how he roars when he sees them coming back. But, sisters, just come along, don't be afraid of his roaring, for that is all Jesus will let him do. So if he roars from the iceberg pulpits of North-pole churches and from the tripods of anti-holiness papers, just let him roar. It will do you good. Jesus lets him roar to scare off the unworthy and inspire the elect.

When God made man he made him out of the dirt. When he made woman he made her out of man. So woman is a double refinement. She everywhere vindicates her superiority. A wise general always attacks the stronger citadel first. Man is physically stronger than woman. So is the lion stronger than man. But woman is morally stronger than man. Oh, what a victory Satan won when he so awfully paralyzed the larger, truer and more efficient wing of the army.

Give the women a chance, (and they are taking it), and they will rob Satan of his whisky, confront him on every ramification of the battle field, fill the saloons and brothels of Christendom, and the jungles of heathendom, with blood-washed and fire-baptized missionaries, march to the music of full salvation to the ends of the earth, belt the globe with the glory of God, and transform a world long groaning in sin and misery into a paradise.

Homer, the heathen poet, puts into the mouth of Hector the great Trojan hero, thus addressing his intrepid wife, Andromache, who wanted to follow him to the battle field:

"My wife, go back to your work at home,
To guide the spindle and direct the loom;
Me glory summons to the martial plain;
The field of battle is the field for man;
Where heroes war the foremost place I claim,

The first in danger and the first in fame."

That will do for a heathen warrior on whom the "Sun of Righteousness never shone." Not so in the army of the Lord. The women are better by nature and by grace than the men. Hence, they are the more efficient wing of the army. They lingered last at the cross, and hastened first to the sepulchre. First to greet the risen Savior, and first to receive from His lips the commission of the full-orbed gospel to a despondent church, and a lost world. She is first in every noble enterprise when the men will let her. Bishop Taylor, God's greatest living saint, says whereas he prefers a husband and wife, if he has to take a single person for a missionary station, give him a lonely woman rather than a single man. I doubt not but God has given him deeper insight into gospel work than any other man in the world. He gives his verdict in favor of woman. We need millions of holy women right now to help us save the world. Brethren, some of us are heartily ashamed we have done so little for the Master. I, for one, have settled the question; if I can do no more I will get out of the way of the women. Remember Aesop's fable of the surly dog that would not eat the hay nor let the ox eat it. Oh; brethren, for the sake of the souls Jesus bought with his blood, let us get out of the way of the women.

Many of, us have done more harm by discouraging the women than we have ever done good. Let us make a new departure, and take a solemn vow to encourage all the men, women and children as long as we live, to get all the religion they can, and do all the good they can. Shame on you to put the brakes on the Lord's train instead of the devil's. Don't you know the New Jerusalem railway is all up grade and needs no brakes? So let us all turn firemen.

I once heard of a man who saw a vision in hell -- five thousand people, all dancing on the point of one cambric needle. They all had room enough to dance and still room enough for the fiddler. What was the solution? Souls so wonderfully small! The soul of a man must be wonderfully small, who, actuated by ignorance, prejudice, or egotism, would lay the weight of a straw on the dear sisterhood, whose hearts the Lord has touched, and whose lips he has anointed with a live coal from heaven's altar.

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THE END