

1 Corinthians - Commentaries by Algernon James Pollock

Comforted of God, What Will It Be? (2:9-10)

(1 Cor. 2:9-10)

WHAT will it be when all the toil is ended?

When we have conquered in the last fierce strife?

When the bright portals of our home are entered?

Pilgrims no longer—heirs of endless life!

Gone the last dust our weary feet have gather'd—

Wiped the last drop from off the aching brow;

Safe in the presence of our God and Father,

Whose strength supports us in the desert now.

What will it be when the effulgent glory

Of day eternal it is ours to see?

When (for the first time in our life's short story)

Pure from all trace of sin our ways shall be.

When, of God's household, in that land elysian,

Where not a thought can mar our perfect rest,

Where not a cloud shall dim the spirit's vision;

Joint-heirs with Christ, we shall be fully blest.

What will it be to see the hidden meaning

Of every trial we have met below?

To trace the secret of our Father's training,

Where faith gained spoils from many a vanquished foe?

All that seems dark to our imperfect vision,

The light of heaven at once will render plain;

Deeper our joy through that all-wise provision -

Suffering awhile, ere with our Lord we reign.

What will it be? Oh, what no thought hath measured,

No eye hath seen, no ear of man hath heard!

Unsearchable the riches Christ hath treasur'd,

Yet all is sure to him who trusts His Word!

On then! though rough and dark the path and dreary;

All toil and pain the end will well repay!

Onward and upward! we may now be weary;

With Jesus soon, to share His home for aye!

The Christian Woman, Christian Woman, The (14:34-38)

Woman's place in nature illustrates her place in grace, or her relation as a Christian woman to God. The manner of woman's creation was unique. Adam is put into a deep sleep — a type of the death of Christ. From his side a rib is taken, a woman made, and presented to him. She was to be a help meet for him (help mate, or counterpart, his like, JND translation). This is typical of the church — the result of the death of Christ — which will be presented to Him as His bride.

The very fact that woman was "taken out of man" proves her equality. She is not an inferior but an equal, a help meet for him. Between man and man there is a similarity, an identity. Between man and woman there is equality but with it diversity. "Doth not even nature itself teach you?" (1 Cor. 11:14) is capable of a wide application. God in His wisdom put great differences in the physical, mental and emotional makeup of man and woman. He has most evidently marked them to be distinct, yet complementary.

The woman, "taken out of man," proclaims the headship God has given man. Her privilege is to accord man the place God has given him. Man and woman are equal morally, but man is the head positionally. Scripture says, "The man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. . . . Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God" (1 Cor. 11:89,1112).

This is all perfectly designed to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the church. In Ephesians 5 the relationship between husband and wife is unfolded. The wife is to submit to the husband, for "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (vs. 23). The husband is to love his wife "as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (vs. 25). The man is told to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they two shall be one flesh (vs. 31). "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (vs. 32).

Eve. We are told, "Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:13-14). Here we see the first and most powerful warning against woman's taking the lead. Instead of repelling the serpent's advances and seeking the help and protection of her God-given head (Adam), she acted in independence, a serious act bringing sad results.

Sarah evidently was a woman of vigorous personality—no weakling without mind or will of her own. On the contrary — she was a masterful woman. But she stands as the example of "holy women . . . who trusted in God . . . being in subjection unto their own husbands. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well" (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Deborah occupies a unique place in Scripture. She was a prophetess — a married woman — who judged Israel (Judges 4:45). Scripture does not speak against the place she took, nor does it approve. It simply states the fact. We hear from Deborah what she thought of it. She condemns the backwardness of the men and tells Barak to go against Sisera. As a prophetess she told him that the Lord would deliver the enemy into his hand. But Barak in his unmanliness would not go unless Deborah accompanied him. She acceded to his request but informed him that the journey would not be for his honor. Sisera would be sold into the hand of a woman (Judg. 4:9). Surely Deborah's reply suggested that if it were a matter of shame for Barak that a woman should slay Sisera, it was not less a matter of shame that a woman should be forced by the men's backwardness to judge Israel.

Here we find the position of godly women honorable and beautiful in the highest degree. The virgin Mary ("highly favored," "blessed . . . among women"), her cousin Elizabeth, and Anna (the aged widow of eighty-four years intent on God's service) are lovely characters in connection with the birth of Christ.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word (Luke 10:39). It was she who anointed Him for His burial, which act is never to lose its fragrance: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13). She earned high praise: "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8). To Mary Magdalene was given the high honor of carrying the wondrous message of association with a risen Christ to His disciples: "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17). Godly women "ministered unto Him of their substance" (Luke 8:3). What honor! And when we come to Christ ascended and the Holy Spirit given, we are reminded of the "honorable women which were Greeks" who believed (Acts 17:12), of Paul's commendation of "those women which labored with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:3), and of Priscilla, who, under the headship of her husband, had the privilege of instructing the eloquent Apollos in the "way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). What a lovely and honored place is thus outlined for Christian women!

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:34-35). For woman to take part publicly in the church is in defiance of Scripture. Here the word "speak" does not mean "chatter"; it is the ordinary word for "speak" and is used in reference to God Himself. However, a single woman might personally ask a brother her questions and be within the spirit of divine instruction.

"If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. 14:37-38). "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). Here "men" means men as distinct from women. The Greek word for "men" excludes women. Verse 9 exhorts women to modesty and simplicity in dress.

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11-12). The conduct here is between man and woman and would include any public speaking where both sexes were present. Two reasons are given: “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (vs. 13). Evidently this is the strongest reason showing the order of creation; the illustration, too, of Christ and the church. “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (vs. 14). Here governmental consequences are seen resulting from the first woman’s not being subject to God’s order.

Her place is emphatically not one of public testimony. There are sixty-six books in the Bible, and all the authors are men. They were distinctly chosen of God. There were twelve apostles — all men. There were “seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” chosen in Acts 6 to “serve tables.” Not one woman was chosen. There were many witnesses cited in 1 Corinthians 15 to prove the resurrection of the Lord. Men are mentioned as witnesses, but no women. This is strikingly significant, as Mary was the first individual to see Christ risen and was entrusted by Him with a wonderful message to the disciples. Her exclusion from the list of witnesses is the strongest possible proof that Scripture does not give woman a place of public testimony. Bishops were appointed in the early church — all men. Deacons and elders were also appointed and described in 1 Timothy and in Titus. They were all men. There are two witnesses in Revelation 11. They are prophets — men.

The Christian woman’s stepping out of her place is the destruction of the type of Christ and His bride — the church. “The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). But some say that there is provision made in Scripture for women to pray and prophesy, that Philip’s daughters prophesied (it never says they prophesied before Paul, as many state), and that women labored with Paul in the gospel. They therefore inquire if this does not prove their right to public ministry. It leaves room for very real, blessed service. But it clearly does not include ministry in the assembly, or public speaking before a mixed audience of men and women. If the Holy Spirit led women to such service, He would lead them to violate Scripture given by the same Holy Spirit.

It may be argued that women evangelists have been much used of God. That may be true, but it is no proof that they were right, and in all possibility they would have been used still more if their service had been kept within scriptural bounds. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

When women get out of their place, they become the special prey of the devil: It is a woman in the parable who introduced the leaven into the three measures of meal — type of the introduction of corrupting principles, which have permeated the Christian profession (Matt. 13:33). It was a woman — Eve — who was “in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14).

In the perilous times of the last days spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:17, we find “women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,” who are led captive by evil men. It is a woman — Jezebel — who stands historically in the Old Testament as an example of all that is hateful and wicked and who stands figuratively in Revelation as the example of ecclesiastical corruption and religious depravity of the worst type (Rev. 2:20).

In the present day the great majority of spiritist mediums are women. Some spiritist movements began with women — the Fox sisters. It was a woman, Mrs. White, who by her blasphemous pretensions has been the leader and largely the inventor of Seventh-Day Adventism. Christian Science—which is neither Christian nor scientific—was originated by Mrs. Eddy.

“Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she diligently followed every good work” (1 Tim. 5:10). There is ample opportunity for the ministry of women among women and children, “mothers” meetings, and Sunday school work, besides the helping of the Lord’s servants in a similar way to which the women labored with Paul. The comfort and encouragement of an active, godly Christian woman who is moved by love to Christ and souls, and yet governed by Scripture, is immense. When we meet such, we deeply respect them.

Mary anointed the Lord for His burial. Martha served the Lord; Phebe was a servant of the church, and helped many; Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14), welcomed the Apostle to her house. Women labored with Paul in the gospel. May the descendants of these godly women be found in every city and town in the world! There is no need for women to regret the divine restrictions set on their service. There is more work for them to do than they can ever accomplish.

Let Christian women rise from their study of Scripture determined, by God’s grace, to carry out its instructions as to their relation to man; to illustrate by their conduct the wonderful truth of Christ and the church; to be individually a protest against the lawless spirit of the age; to glory in the wonderful and unique place which is theirs. Then will God be glorified. Then will their true usefulness be available to the full. Then will Christian men greatly respect them, be helped and influenced by them, and find out what that truly wonderful word — help meet — which alone belongs to woman — means.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Prov. 31:10-31).