

## A WOMAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

### Introduction

- A. Text: **Rom. 16:1,2**.
- B. Not a few of the Lord's servants are Christians whose lives have been shaped by godly women — Timothy was such a man.
  - 1. "When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (**2 Tim. 1:5**).
  - 2. "But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (**2 Tim. 3:14,15**).
- C. There is likely not a person who is strong in the Lord and effective in His work who does not owe *profound gratitude* to several women for the role they have played in his or her spiritual development.
- D. It would be hard to overestimate the contribution that women make to the local congregation.
- E. Since their *special endowments* suit them for important work, women are not merely useful to the Lord's work, they are *absolutely critical*.
- F. Paul's remarks about Phoebe are instructive.
  - 1. He wrote to the church in Rome: "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also" (**Rom. 16:1,2**).
  - 2. Paul does not specify what kind of service Phoebe was rendering, but his language clearly shows that this sister was doing things in the Lord's work that amounted to far more than a token contribution.
  - 3. She is described as a "servant of the church in Cenchrea."
  - 4. Paul said that she had been "a helper of many and of myself also."
  - 5. Her work was important enough that Paul instructed the church in Rome to assist her in whatever way she had need while she was there.
- G. **Rom. 16:1,2** alone is enough to teach us that there is *ample scope* within the Lord's work for women to serve in deeply significant ways.

### I. BENEVOLENCE

- A. Seeing to the needs of the sick, those who are impoverished, etc. is not just work for women.
- B. The Lord's people, men no less than women, need to do more than we sometimes do to help meet physical needs among the saints (**Jas. 2:14-16; 1 Jn. 3:17,18**).
- C. There can be no question, however, that sisters in the Lord are capable of bringing to this important work a *grace* and a *beauty* that men are normally not capable of.
- D. Certainly, the women who waited upon the physical needs of the Lord Himself added a touch of grace that His male disciples were hardly able to supply.
  - 1. "And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar" (**Mt. 27:55**).
  - 2. "And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities — Mary called Magdalene,

out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their sustenance" (**Lk. 8:2,3**).

- E. Being a disciple means putting ourselves on the line for those who need us. Cf. **Jn. 13:12-17**.
- F. The unique attributes of femininity make the work of benevolence far more heartening than it would be without them.

## II. EDIFICATION

- A. Numerous passages speak of our need, whether men or women, to *encourage* and *strengthen* our fellow saints.
- B. The specifics will vary depending on whether it is a man or a woman doing the edifying, but instructions like the following have important implications for the spiritual work of women as well as men:
  1. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (**Gal. 6:2**).
  2. "Comfort each other and edify one another" (**1 Thess. 5:11**).
  3. "Comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak" (**1 Thess. 5:14**).
- C. This speaker can personally testify to the *powerful and unique ability* of sisters in the Lord to encourage.
  1. Time and again in my life I have been the beneficiary of words and actions of edification that have come from women among the Lord's people.
  2. I do not doubt that, as a man, my survival spiritually and my continuation as a preacher is largely the result of strength imparted to me by sisters who knew exactly *what to say* and *how to say it*.
- D. In the "hospital for souls" that is the local congregation, we desperately need what women can do to bind up wounds and lift spirits.
  1. Men are natural *producers* — women are natural *nurturers*.
  2. Especially when personal crises, difficulties in relationships, emotional problems, and family breakdowns are so widespread, the *gift of encouragement* that God has given many women is essential.
- E. In the matter of edification, there is a special need for women to see themselves as teachers of young people and of other women.
  1. We have mentioned the impact on Timothy's life of his mother's and his grandmother's teaching.
  2. The Scriptures also indicate that older women are to teach younger women: "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things — that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (**Tit. 2:3-5**).
- F. As the *family* unit in society continues to deteriorate and the teaching network of the extended family is lost, there will be all the more need for spiritually mature women in our congregations to assume the role of edifiers and teachers of the wisdom that used to be passed down by parents and grandparents.
- G. Without this *womanly wisdom* about the basic business of living life, our congregational work is seriously hindered.

## III. EVANGELISM

- A. Not only are women capable of being edifiers, it is possible for them to play an important role in evangelism, the work of *teaching those who have not yet obeyed the gospel*.

- B. The realm of personal evangelism contains many opportunities for women to plant the seed of the gospel in the hearts of those who are lost.
1. We are told that both Aquila and Priscilla were involved in teaching Apollos the way of God more perfectly - **Ac. 18:26**.
  2. In more than one place, Paul speaks of women who were fellow workers in the gospel. Cf. **Rom. 16:3,6,12**; etc.
  3. Of Euodia and Syntyche, he said, "Help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life" (**Phil. 4:3**).
- C. The Scriptural *limitations* on the teaching work of women (**1 Tim. 2:12**; etc.) should never be thought of as barring women from *any participation* in the work of rescuing lost souls. Cf. **1 Cor. 12:14-18**.
- D. Indeed, there are times when individuals can be won to the Lord by the efforts of a woman when it is not likely they could be won *any other way*. Cf. **1 Pt. 3:1,2**.
- E. Women who have both a deep love for the Lord and a skilled understanding of the Scriptures are powerful forces in the work of evangelism.
- F. We need more women who will accept the challenge of *doing all they can do*, uniquely as women, to win the world to Christ.
- G. The imperative of the Great Commission applies not just to men, but to all the saints of God. Cf. **Mt. 28:18-20**.

### Conclusion

- A. There is much that women can do to invest themselves in the work of the local church.
1. The very act of praying for the work is no small thing.
  2. Beyond that, there is a wide range of specific activities by which women — without at all stepping beyond Scriptural boundaries — may contribute to the benevolence, edification, and evangelism that their fellow Christians are engaged in.
  3. Every single member of the body has the duty to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (**Tit. 2:10**).
- B. It is not too much to say, considering the high gifts granted by God to women, that *the gospel is never adorned any more beautifully* than when women of the Lord love and work and serve faithfully in His work.