

From Where I Sit . . .

"THE DIFFERENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE"

I continue to be in shock and horror as I read reports from around the country as to the changes that are underway within congregations of the Lord's church. There are disturbing trends within the church to discount sacred Truths as "mere tradition," and to conform to the mind sets of a secular world. The secular world has influenced many preachers, elders, and churches to redefine concepts for which we do not have a right to redefine.

I have watched the "women's movement" within the church for many years with some concern as I learned of more and more women asserting their "rights" of equality in leadership in the church. We hear of more and more congregations that are adopting a policy that the ladies can take every leading role in the church short of the pulpit and the eldership. These will no doubt be next! Just this week I've read of one minister's wife in a congregation that calls itself a church of Christ in a northern state who shares the pulpit responsibilities with her husband and is on staff.

It would be tragic for us to sit on the sidelines and say nothing about this departure from the Biblical pattern. Our young adults and boys and girls must be taught so they not fall into these traps. Inspired writers made it very clear that the role of men and women in the church was different, as in fact it was to be in the home (Eph. 5:23-25). This is not chauvinism or an "iddish" for male superiority, but merely a desire to honor God's Word.

Years passing, culture changes, and human desires do not explain away the Apostle Paul's writings, as well as those of Peter concerning the God defined role differences. Paul instructs in I Timothy 2:8-15 - *"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 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. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 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."*

Some have written Paul's words off as tied to a culture of the day and thus they believe the ban in I Corinthians 14:34-35 was lifted when cultural changes made it possible. *"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 any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."* Significantly, Paul doesn't tie his discussion in I Timothy 2:8-15 to culture, but to creation, and to the Will of God.

Peter's comments in I Peter 3:1-8 are likewise not set in First Century culture, but in ageless relationships that were illustrated by Sarah's respect for her husband Abraham.

For centuries, God's Truths have stood out as distinctive and Different from the world view on all spiritual matters. We must be diligent students of the Bible, and we must make certain that we do not allow these changing times to pressure us into assuming that the DIFFERENCE doesn't make any DIFFERENCE any more. Our interest in doing what God authorizes may set us apart from other religions. It certainly will set us apart from the world. And now it seems that it will set us apart from some even from among our own selves who are bent on changing the structure of the church and the method of interpreting the Bible.

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