

The Ministry of Women

The following comments are from writings of Dr. H.A. Ironside:

“It is very easy to become one-sided in regard to Scriptural doctrines and principles. One would seek to preserve the golden mean and recognize the breadth of Scripture, as well as its clearly defined limitations. I do not see how anyone, desiring to be subject to the Word of God, can refuse the plain definite instruction in regard to women’s place in the assembly as set forth in 1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2. When the assembly is gathered together in a Scriptural way, then a woman’s place is one of silence so far as public ministry is concerned (and also I take it so far as public prayer goes). She recognizes the headship of the man through whom Christ speaks to His Church, which is aptly pictured by the subject women. This is no slight upon the woman. It is simply the recognition of her proper place in nature. In the new creation there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. But this fact does not alter our natural standing as men and women living in this world. Outside of the assembly of God other conditions prevail, which are not necessarily governed by the passages. 1 Corinthians 11 is to my mind utterly unintelligible, unless it indicates a sphere of more or less publicity, where women in the company of men are at liberty under certain conditions to pray and prophesy. Such liberty, however, needs to be carefully guarded lest it develop into license, and the women aspire to a place from which God in His wisdom would shield her.

“The blatant feminism of the present day is one of the signs of the end-times. It is but one symptom of the lawlessness of the closing days of the dispensation. Christian women should be the last to encourage anything of this kind.

“Some have raised the question as to the right of a woman to teach a bible class or instruct in school, where both sexes are present. I should say that this has nothing whatever to do with the prohibitions mentioned above. Such a class or school does not constitute an assembly of God. It is a voluntary arrangement in which people agree to go together for instruction and help. If they choose to sit under a woman teacher she certainly could not be charged with usurping authority. Priscilla evidently took precedence over her husband in the instruction of Apollos. And he (though an eloquent man and mighty in Scriptures) was not too proud to learn from her. To teach in an authoritative way is forbidden the woman. To instruct in a class while maintaining her womanly character is quite in keeping with the doctrine of Scripture.

“There is another point, however, which it is well to keep in mind. When things had gone wrong in Israel, and men had proven recreant to their trust, God raised up a woman judge and gave to Deborah a place quite contrary to the orderly condition of things. We need not be surprised, if in the present confusion of Christendom (when men have failed wretchedly to maintain the truth of God) He raises up a host of holy women, to hold aloft the banner of truth which has fallen from the hands of the unfaithful men.

Some years ago, Dr. H.H. Snell (an English Bible Teacher of repute) was walking along a busy street with a brother in the Lord. Attention was attracted to two women who were conducting a street meeting, giving out the gospel to a great throng of both sexes. The unnamed brother (a rigid stickler as to the letter of the Word) turned to the Doctor and said, ‘What a disgusting thing to see those women so forgetful of their place as to be preaching in public.’ The venerable Dr. Snell replied, ‘My brother, it is because you and I are not there that God is using them.’”