

PROTESTANT REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL
JOURNAL

This Journal is published and distributed in limited quantities, at no charge, by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested persons desiring to have their names on the mailing list should address the Editor, Prof. H. Hanko, at the address of the school, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
of the
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
Grandville, Michigan

November, 1975

Volume IX, No. 1

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EDITORIAL NOTES

-- Prof. H. Hanko--

With this issue of the Journal we begin Volume IX. This means that we are entering our ninth year of publication. Our Journal, though a modest publication, has been well received by our readers who have often written encouraging letters to us. We continue to covet your prayers.

Prof. Decker is beginning a new series in this issue concerning the present vexing problem of woman in office. This is a problem which is, to a greater or lesser degree, being faced by all the mainline churches in this country and abroad. However, as is clear from the discussions of this issue, the problem is not simply one concerning the teaching of Scripture on this matter; Scripture is clear enough. But the problem is one involving the whole question of a Scriptural Hermeneutics. Prof. Decker begins an examination of this question therefore, by giving a thorough exegesis of the pertinent passages involved. And such an approach implies a Hermeneutics which is historically the Hermeneutics of the Reformation.

Prof. Hanko continues his exegesis of the last verses of James 5.

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Our Seminary has begun a new year of school work. We opened our doors last September with an enrollment of fifteen students. Seven of these are in the Seminary department, and eight are in the Pre-seminary department. We ask you to bring the needs of our school before the throne of grace that God may prosper our work and establish the work of our hands upon us.

Exegesis of James 5: 13-20

INTRODUCTION

In our last article, we began the exegesis of James 5: 13-20. We discussed in that article the meaning of vss. 13 and 14. We noticed especially that James asks a series of three questions in these verses, and we stressed the fact that these three questions stand in a definite relationship to each other. In discussing this relationship, we noticed that James, along with the rest of the Scriptures, emphasizes the fact that the spiritual norm for the child of God is to be happy. And if the child of God is happy, as he should be, James admonishes him to express his thanksgiving by singing Psalms of praise to God. But James recognizes the fact that, for various reasons, the child of God is not always happy. And so he asks the question: "Is any among you afflicted?" If this happens to be the spiritual frame of mind in which we find ourselves, James admonishes us to pray; and the emphasis is on the fact that prayer is the solution to the problems and troubles of life. But, beyond this, James also recognizes the fact that sometimes the afflictions and trials of the people of God are so great that they are unable to pray. It is to this situation that he addresses himself when he asks the question: "Is any sick among you?" If this is the spiritual condition in which the child of God finds himself, James admonishes such a person, "to call for the elders of the church." If the elders of the church come, they will pray over such an afflicted one and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

We must now turn our attention to further exegesis of these verses.

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James 5: 15 "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

Verse 15 therefore, stands in close connection with verse 14. When the apostle speaks of "the prayer of faith" he refers specifically to the prayer which the elders of the church offer on behalf of one who is afflicted. And vs. 15 describes the result

of that prayer in the words: "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

The expression, "the prayer of faith" is a very beautiful expression. The genitive, "of faith"¹ is undoubtedly a genitive of description. The idea is therefore that the words "of faith" describe the nature of the prayer. The prayer is a prayer characterized by faith.

This kind of prayer is not, as the Neo-pentecostals are wont to explain it, a prayer which will get us whatever we desire if only we are persistent enough. Such a prayer is never the prayer of the child of God, for the child of God never attempts to impose his will upon his Father in heaven. Rather, the reference is to the prayer of the elders who pray on behalf of him who is afflicted. It is a prayer which is characterized by faith fundamentally because faith is always the bond which unites the believer to Christ. When prayer is characterized by faith, prayer is the conscious reaching out of the child of God to Christ or to God through Christ. It is a prayer which is a spontaneous reaching out of the new life of Christ in the heart of God's child to God. And because of this, prayer is therefore a confession of faith, a confession of dependence upon God's will; but, at the same time, a confidence of being heard. It is this type of prayer which characterizes all the prayers of the people of God; but in the context, it is specifically the kind of prayer which is made by the elders of the church.

The apostle assures us that this prayer shall save the sick.

We must pay attention for a moment to the meaning of the expression, "the sick." In the first place it is interesting to notice that the word which is translated here in the King James Version is a word which differs from the word which is translated the same way in vs. 14.² We noticed already that the expression as it is used in vs. 14 does not mean in this context physical

1. τῆς πίστεως.

2. In vs. 14, the question, "is any sick among you" reads in the Greek: ἀσθενεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν; while in this verse the expression, "shall save the sick", reads in the Greek: σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα.

sickness, but refers rather to spiritual sickness. That contention is substantiated by the fact that the word which is used in vs. 15 also does not mean "sick" in the physical sense. This word is actually only found three times in the New Testament. Besides its use in this text it is found in the Textus Receptus, according to Thayer, in Rev. 2: 3, but is generally considered a rejected reading there. The only other place it is found is in Heb. 12: 3 where we read: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."³ It is completely obvious therefore, that the meaning of the word cannot be one of physical illness. Surely in Heb. 12: 3 it refers to a spiritual weariness; and the same is undoubtedly the meaning here. This then would be in perfect harmony with the idea which the apostle sets forth in vs. 14. And the meaning is that one is weary because of the burden of sin and because of the afflictions which are his lot here below. This spiritual weariness is so great in fact that the child of God, experiencing such great weariness, cannot himself pray.

The prayer of faith, the apostle assures us, shall save the weary. Notice emphatically, that the apostle does not use the expression "shall heal", but "shall save." By means of the prayer of the elders, the weary shall be saved. That is, prayer will be the means whereby the weary soul is brought to the throne of God's grace and God will restore such a one to the joy of salvation. In the midst of his afflictions and trials, he has lost the assurance of this salvation. The apostle does not mean to teach of course, that there is a certain falling away of the saints. The idea is rather that the child of God loses for a time the conscious experience and assurance of that salvation. When prayer is offered on his behalf and God answers that prayer, the conscious experience of salvation is once again his. This is the opposite of being afflicted. This is the spiritual cure for his sufferings. And when this prayer of the elders is answered the child of God himself shall once again be able to pray, and by means of his

³. The words which are translated, "lest ye be weary" are in the Greek, ἵνα μὴ κἀμῆτε.

prayers escape his afflictions, and shall once again be happy and be able to sing psalms of praise to God.

These words are put in the text in the form of a promise--a promise without any qualification. The Lord promises that this prayer shall surely be heard. And it is incumbent upon those elders who labor in this pastoral work that they believe this word of God and receive it as the very promise of God Himself.

To this is added the expression, "and the Lord shall raise him up." By this expression the Lord does not necessarily promise us that he will raise us from a bed of illness or heal our physical diseases. And certainly the promise is not that God will raise us from the grave if we die. Rather, this phrase is a further expression of the salvation which is spoken of in the immediately preceding clause. That is, the child of God who is afflicted will be raised in the sense of being restored to spiritual strength; being raised out of his afflictions; being raised out of the depths of sorrow and trouble to the heights of joy and peace. It is very emphatically stated that the Lord will raise him. Spiritual restoration comes only from the Lord and can never come from man. Not even all our prayers would mean anything if the Lord did not bring restoration. And indeed, while prayer is certainly the means which the Lord uses to bring the weary soul to the throne of grace, nevertheless such spiritual restoration can come only from God Who alone can save.

It is very significant that the apostle adds in this verse: "and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The grammar here is very interesting. The whole sentence is cast in the form of a third class condition, and a third class condition is, in the Greek, always a condition of probability.⁴ It is probable therefore, James is saying, that sin lies behind our affliction. There is a distinction here which we must remember. The affliction itself which comes upon us is brought by the hand of God. Our reaction to that affliction may be sin. We have spoken of this already in our previous article in connection with our explanation

⁴. καὶ ἂν ἀμαρτίας ᾗ πεποιηκώς, ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ.

of vs. 14. There we pointed out that it is the calling of the child of God always to submit to the way of the Lord and to be assured of the truth of the Scriptures that all things work together for his good. But we noticed in that connection that there were examples in the Scriptures in which the saints, overwhelmed by their many afflictions, were thrown into a state of spiritual distress. We pointed out that this spiritual distress was sin. While this idea is certainly implied, nevertheless the apostle suggests something more here. It is not only that our reactions to the sufferings in which the Lord is pleased to call us to walk is sin; it is also possible that sin lies behind our affliction. We may have committed a sin, and it is that sin which brings on our troubles. The apostle is not saying by any means that this is always the case, for it is sometimes true that people of God who are spiritually strong are nevertheless afflicted. And it is certainly not always clear that our afflictions are brought on by a specific sin which is present in our lives. Nevertheless, this can oftentimes be the case. And it is this which the apostle suggests by the use of this third class condition. No doubt this is also the reason why the apostle uses a perfect periphrastic construction.⁵ It is almost as if the apostle means to say that we are in a state of sin. That is, that we have sinned and that this sin remains unconfessed in our lives, and that therefore we are at present in a state of sin.

Sins lie at the bottom of all of our troubles and problems. We need not say very much more about this at this point because the apostle picks up this idea more in detail in the following verse. But the point which needs emphasis here is exactly the fact that if these sins are the reason why we cannot pray, these sins too, through the prayer of the elders, will be forgiven. We cannot pray ourselves because we are so deeply disturbed and because we cannot pray by ourselves we cannot find forgiveness for sin by means of our own prayers. The prayers of those therefore, whom Christ has appointed will be intercessory prayers; and as intercessory prayers they will also bring forgiveness. Through their prayers we will

5. ἡ πεποιηκώς.

ourselves experience the forgiveness of sins. We will be delivered from our troubles. And we will be restored to the joy of salvation. The Lord does not promise that He will take away our sicknesses, or that He will remove from us the problems which we face, or that He will take from our backs the heavy load which He has called us to bear. But He does promise that He will give to us the grace to bear these trials and afflictions with joy and with patience. And if sin lies at the root of our problems, He will graciously and mercifully forgive these sins through the blood of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if our sins are forgiven, we will be able to sing with the Psalmist in Psalm 32: "How blest is he whose trespass hath freely been forgiven; whose sin is wholly covered before the sight of heaven."

There is one point yet which ought to be made in this connection. That point is this. If our sins are forgiven by means of the prayers of the elders of the church, then certainly it means too that these prayers of the elders of the church are prayers which involve confession of sin. This presents us with a pastoral problem of no little importance. If the elders are to bring our sins before the throne of God's grace and seek forgiveness for us as our intercessors, it would seem to be necessary that the elders themselves are aware of these sins. And that in turn would seem to imply on the one hand, that we make confession of our sins to those whom God sends to us as representatives of Christ. And, on the other hand it would seem to imply that, if we do not make confession of our sins to the elders of the church, the elders of the church are themselves under solemn obligation to inquire concerning these things and to bring the Word of God to us so that we are brought to confession of sin and repentance.

Generally speaking, this is also usually the case and part of the work of elders. Nevertheless, a word of caution is in order. There are times no doubt, when the elders would act amiss if they would pry relentlessly into the innermost hearts of the people of God. Our hearts are so filled with sin and iniquity, that there are times when that which is in our hearts ought only to be known to us and to our God. And elders go beyond the duties of their

calling if they try unceasingly to enter into this innermost sanctuary of the human heart. There are times therefore, when elders must be content with the assurance, after they have talked to one of their sheep, to bring the sins of that sheep in general before the throne of grace without specifically knowing the nature of them. They ought not to force a troubled Christian to bare his whole heart and to uncover his whole soul before them. There are reasons for this. These reasons we ought to understand, because it is characteristic of much psychotherapy which is carried on in mental institutions to force a stricken individual to pour out all that is within his heart and soul. For one thing, the elders need not necessarily always know the specific character of a sin in order to make an intercessory prayer on behalf of one of their sheep and in order to bring that sheep by prayer to the throne of grace. In the second place, a sheep himself may be so reluctant to speak of the sins which he has harbored in his heart and in his mind that it will do greater spiritual damage to him to speak of them than if he were to remain silent about them. In the third place oftentimes, when a child of God is forced against his better judgment to reveal all that lives within his soul, the relationships, from that time on, between him and the elder who has visited him are so strained that further pastoral work becomes an impossibility. It is always better therefore, that an elder, if at all possible, respect the inner sanctuary of the heart of his sheep.

Nevertheless, the work of the elder must be of such a kind, as he brings the Word of God, that the sheep is brought to repentance and sorrow for sin. And even though the sinner may not himself specifically and concretely explain to the elder the nature of his sin, nevertheless he must assure the elder that he is sorry for his sin and that he confesses his sin to his God. And, by means of the Word of God, the elder must lead the sinner to exactly that point. It is then that the prayer of faith will save the weary and the Lord will raise him up. And if he have committed sin his sin will be forgiven him.

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James 5: 16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

This verse stands in close connection with the preceding. This is not immediately evident from our Authorized Version, for the Authorized Version omits in the text the important word, "therefore."⁶ It is clear from this conjunction that the apostle is making a conclusion here. We are to sing when we are happy; if we cannot sing because we are not happy, we are to pray; if we cannot pray, we are to call the elders of the church. This verse now is a conclusion which the apostle reaches on the basis of what he has said. The idea is therefore, that the apostle applies all he has said in a very particular way to our mutual relationships as saints in the household of faith. Sin lies at the bottom of all our troubles, but also at the bottom of all the troubles in the church. We must therefore, confess our faults to one another and pray for one another.

We live together in the bonds of fellowship within the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is true on a congregational level, on a denominational level, and in our relationships to all the saints in all the world. Our real zeal and concern is or ought to be for this cause of God. The church, after all, lies at the very center of our life. The church is the chief concern of God's saints. And the people of God are concerned particularly that the enemies of the church of Christ may not prevail against the church, that the gates of hell may not overcome the church, and that the enemies of the church may be defeated. They are concerned that the church of Christ may prosper and that the cause of the gospel may go forward in the world and that the saints of God may be saved. So much is this concern for the church at the center of their lives that all their life in the world is ultimately and finally directed towards the welfare of the church.

But there is a great deal of sin within the church because

⁶.The best MSS insert in the text the word οὐν.

there is sin within the lives of the people of God. Each one of us has his own personal sins which horribly affect the life of the saints mutually. These sins are real and terrible and affect all the situations and relationships in which we live. Sin, being what it is, is always a destructive force in our relationships with one another. Sin affects the relationships of husband and wife, of parent and child, of office bearer and member of the church, of minister and congregation, of saint and saint. While the church is called upon to live in the fellowship and communion of the saints, in the unity of one faith, one hope, one doctrine, sin by its very nature destroys these relationships. And to the extent that sin affects these relationships, to that extent the communion and fellowship of the saints is weakened.

But there are within the church not only individual and personal sins; there are also congregational and denominational sins. Congregations, in their organic unity, can also be guilty of particular and specific sins. The same is true of denominations. And when particular and specific sins characterize congregations and denominations, the results are the same. The unity which the church of Christ is called upon to express either on the congregational or denominational level is affected by means of the sins which characterize these churches. Here too sin is always destructive. It tears apart families, congregations, churches, and denominations. It brings hard feelings, creates distrust, arouses bitterness, and is the mother of strife. The result is that the Spirit is grieved, prayer goes unanswered, sin intrudes upon our prayers and our relationships with our fellow saints, and congregational and denominational life suffers. And because sin disrupts and destroys the communion of the saints, the work of the church is stymied and the church becomes easy prey to the onslaughts of Satan. These sins can only be removed through confession and forgiveness.

Hence the apostle admonishes us to confess our sins to one another. Negatively, this does not mean that we must confess every sin of which we are guilty to everyone in the church. This would be impossible, obviously. The result would be that we would be spending all our time in one another's fellowship confessing all

manner of sins. Such is not the apostle's meaning. Positively however, the admonition means that we acknowledge readily before everyone that we are sinners and that we are not above every kind of sin of which the human heart is capable. We do not present ourselves to our fellow members in the congregation as if we were perfect, and in this way exalt ourselves above our fellow saints. This leads to a holier-than-thou attitude which is detrimental to the welfare of the church. Rather we so conduct ourselves that our life is a constant expression of our awareness that we are sinners saved by grace. Further, we confess before one another that, in the words of the apostle Paul, we are the chief of all sinners. It is only in this way that we shall be able to fulfill the admonition of Scripture to esteem others better than ourselves.⁷ And finally, and very specifically, we must confess concretely those particular sins which we have committed by means of which we have done harm to those with whom we are called to live together in the one household of faith. While it is true that not all our sins, especially those of a very personal character, do not immediately affect our fellow saints, nevertheless there are many sins which we commit which specifically and definitely affect our relationships to these fellow saints by doing harm to them.

Hence, we must confess these sins. And we must confess them to those against whom we have sinned. This is very important. That we confess our sins to one another is important in the first place because this is the only way in which sin can be removed. And because this is the only way in which sin can be removed it is the only way in which the communion of the saints can be restored. In the second place, this admonition is very important because this is so very difficult to do. We all have so many excuses, so many reasons why we should not and need not do this, so many ways in which we justify ourselves. We are always ready to point the finger of accusation at another, but we are most reluctant to admit and confess heartily our own wrong. What we condemn in others we approve in ourselves. And we justify this on the grounds that in

⁷ See Phil. 2: 3.

our case there were mitigating circumstances which made it altogether right and proper for us to do what we did. All these attempts at self-justification continuously stand in the way of fulfilling this admonition. In the third place this admonition is important because it is only when we confess our sins to one another that we are able also to pray for one another.

This admonition to pray for one another the apostle also adds to the text. Presupposed are all the relationships between the saints which we mentioned above. Presupposed also is our confession of our sins to one another, for without confession prayer is difficult, if not impossible. The prayers which we are to make on behalf of one another are not described specifically by the apostle, although the content of these prayers is suggested by the example of Elijah which is given in vss. 17 and 18. Yet, obviously, such prayers include in general prayers for the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ with all that that implies. And these prayers must also include petitions which are specifically made for the spiritual needs of God's people in connection with their spiritual welfare and the particular problems and difficulties in life which they experience. The more intimately we live together in the communion of the saints in all the relationships of life, the better we know the needs of our fellow saints. And to the extent that we know the deep and dark ways through which God is pleased oftentimes to lead His people, to that extent also we are able to bring these needs before the throne of God's grace.

To these admonitions is attached a purpose clause, "in order that ye may be healed."⁸ This clause expresses therefore the purpose of our confessing our sins to one another and the purpose of our praying for one another. But because this is the purpose, implied also in this is the end or result which we desire. That is, in our very prayers we express to God that this is the reason why we pray. We desire that we may be healed. But at the same time, there is implied in this purpose clause the fact that God promises us such spiritual healing. If this is the purpose of our

8. ὥπως ἰαθῆτε.

prayers, as it is, then certainly that purpose will also be realized. When we confess our sins to one another and pray for one another, then God will surely also heal us.

The word which is used here for healing is a word which Scripture uses for both physical and spiritual healing. Nevertheless, the reference is here once again to spiritual healing. This is in keeping with the entire context. And that this meaning of the word is not at all foreign to the Scriptures is evident from many passages. We read, for example, in Matthew 13: 15: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." This same quotation from Isaiah 6: 9, 10 is found also in John 12: 40 and in Acts 28: 27. Referring to Isaiah 53, the Apostle Peter, in I Peter 2: 24, says: "Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."

It is evident from these and other passages of Scripture that the word which is used here can refer also to the healing of spiritual sickness. Such spiritual sickness, the apostle implies, is brought on by sin. And such spiritual sickness may afflict, as we said, the individual, or the relationship in which an individual lives with his fellow saints, or the relationship in which the saints mutually live together in the church of Jesus Christ. This spiritual sickness is characterized by a disruption of the communion of the saints and by a loss of the peace and joy of salvation. It is therefore a reference to the spiritual illnesses which afflict an individual or a congregation or the church of Christ as a whole.

The passive tense which is used here indicates that it is God Who heals. This healing can come only from Him through Jesus Christ. He is the One Who removes sin by way of confession of sin and He is the One Who graciously bestows upon His people pardon through the blood of the cross. It is when our sins are removed by way of confession and by way of prayer for one another that spiritual healing comes from the hand of the divine Physician.

And when such spiritual healing is once again bestowed upon the saints, God restores His people to peace and happiness, unity and love. And in this way the congregation is once again united in the fellowship of one faith, one hope, one doctrine, one love, and one joy in the Lord their God.

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We have yet to treat the last part of this verse which reads: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The reason why the apostle adds this expression is rather evident. It is added by way of incentive; that is, it is added to spur on the people of God to pray for one another. The expression suggests that the people of God might become weary in praying. It suggests that they might become weary in praying also partly because of the fact that it is not immediately evident to them that their prayers are being heard. And they might conceivably come to the conclusion that, since their prayers are not immediately being answered, therefore their prayers have no efficacy. And if they should conclude that their prayers have no efficacy, they will desist from praying. Hence the apostle reminds them of the fundamental truth that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. This idea is not at all foreign to Scripture. There are, for example, the instances of Jacob who would not let the angel go until the angel blessed him (see Genesis 32: 24-32), and of the Syrophenician woman who continued her request that the Lord heal her daughter even when He had told her that it was not meet to take the bread from children and to cast it to the dogs. (see Matthew 15: 21-28 and Mark 7: 24-30.) This same truth is also taught in Luke 18: 1-8 in which verses is recorded for us the parable of the persecuted widow. This parable is introduced with the words: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." The same truth is emphasized in the parable of the friend at midnight which is recorded for us in Luke 11: 5-13, in which Jesus applies the parable by saying: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The importance of

persevering in prayer is also emphasized by James in the last part of vs. 16.

In the first part of this verse when James admonished us to pray for one another he used a word for prayer which is the generic word and which includes prayer of every kind.⁹ But here a different word for prayer is used.¹⁰ The word which is used here in the latter part of the verse refers specifically to petitionary prayer. Thus the idea is that we must make all kinds of prayers on behalf of one another. These prayers must be prayers of thankfulness for one another, praise to God for the fellowship which we enjoy on behalf of one another, prayers which bless God's Name for the reality of the church in which we enjoy the communion of the saints, etc. But now the apostle turns specifically to the matter of the petitions we must make on behalf of one another. There are, of course, all kinds of petitions which we make when we come in prayer to God. We are dependent creatures after all, who have nothing of ourselves. We are dependent, totally dependent upon Him Who has created us and Who upholds us moment by moment by the Word of His mouth. We must therefore, seek all things from God Who is the overflowing fountain of all good. We must constantly go to Him for the satisfaction and supplying of our needs whether those needs are material or spiritual. We must learn to cast all our cares on God for He cares for us. But James has something specifically in mind here. He refers to particular petitions which we make on behalf of one another. This is James' immediate concern. Nevertheless, although this is James' immediate concern, the principle which James sets forth here is a principle which can be applied generally to all our prayers.

It is important first of all to notice that James is speaking here of the petition of a righteous man. In general, it is only a righteous man who can pray. Wicked men have neither the right nor the power to pray. They have not the right to pray because even the right of prayer is a right given to the people of God by grace. He who is wicked and unrighteous cannot and may not stand

9. προσ-ευχή, ἡ.

10. δέησις, ἡ.

in the presence of the Most Holy God. If a wicked man should attempt to enter into the presence of God through prayer, he would be immediately cast out. Even the people of God, who have no worthiness in themselves, have the right to pray only in and through Jesus Christ. But, besides this, the wicked have not the power to pray. They have not the desire to pray and they have not the spiritual ability to pray. Prayer is for an unregenerate man, a total impossibility.

When James speaks of the petition of a righteous man he does not refer to a man who is extraordinarily good and pious or who has become righteous through his own works. We must be clear on this point. We must not have the notion in our heads that only the prayers of extraordinarily pious men are heard by God. We must not refrain from praying with the erroneous excuse that God will not possibly hear our prayers because we have not attained to the height of piety which other people of God have attained. Nor must we ever look upon others who seem to us unusually good or who seem to us to have attained heights of holiness which we have not attained, as if their prayers are necessarily more effective than ours. On the contrary, when James speaks of the petition of a righteous man, he refers to a man who is righteous in the cross of Jesus Christ. His righteousness is not his own, and has not originated in his own person. He is not righteous because he has merited righteousness through his own works, or because he has lived an exemplary life. He is righteous only because the righteousness of the cross of Christ is imputed to him. And it is only by this righteousness that he has access to the throne of grace. A man who is righteous therefore, is a man who has consciously appropriated this righteousness of the cross by faith. He is a man who prays at the foot of Calvary conscious of his own sins, but who appropriates forgiveness in the blood of the cross. Such a man is the righteous man of whom James speaks.

It is obvious therefore, that James refers here to every child of God who by faith lays hold on the righteousness of Christ. Nevertheless, although this applies generally to every child of God, James defines each child of God as a righteous man because he wishes to stress that our access to God is possible only through

Jesus Christ, and that we have the assurance of being heard only when we consciously appropriate that righteousness for ourselves.

In describing the kind of prayer which a righteous man makes, James speaks of that prayer or that petition as being an energized prayer.¹¹ The kind of petition to which James refers therefore, is the petition which has energy and power because it gets its force from elsewhere. It does not have power in itself. It does not carry its energy or its effectiveness within itself. The question is obviously, where does prayer obtain its energy? Does it obtain its energy from the one who prays? Is it true perhaps that if one who prays can excite himself and express himself in excited tones of voice he has a more energized prayer than the one who prays calmly? None of this can be true. The idea is rather that prayer comes from God Himself through the work of the Holy Spirit. The right to pray is given to us as a gift of grace; the ability to pray is given to us as a gift of grace; but also the very power by which we pray is wrought in us by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. And therefore, the energy of every prayer is the energy of the Holy Spirit. An energized prayer therefore, is a prayer which receives all its power from God through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is true not only of prayer as such, but is true also of the content of every prayer we make.

It is this energized prayer which availeth much. Or perhaps better, according to the meaning of the original,¹² it is this kind of energized prayer of a righteous man which has much strength.

We may pause here for a moment to make a few general remarks. The question could conceivably arise in this connection, whether there is any use or any sense to our prayers if these prayers are, to begin with, energized by God through the Holy Spirit. There are many who arrive at such an erroneous conclusion. There are many

¹¹. This idea is not immediately evident from the Authorized Version of the Bible. Our Authorized Version reads here, "the effectual fervent prayer." In the Greek however, there is but one word used to define prayer, and that word is the participle, ἐνεργουμένη. That is the present passive participle, nominative feminine singular from the verb ἐνεργέω. It is from this Greek word that we get directly our English word energize.

¹². πολλὸ ἰσχύει.

who say that, if our prayers are indeed wrought by grace alone, if God Himself works these prayers within the hearts of His people, then that very fact renders these prayers useless. It is interesting to notice that this conclusion is based on the erroneous assumption that our prayers are for the purpose of informing God concerning things which He could not know except we gave Him the necessary information. This is in flat contradiction with what Jesus says in Matt. 6: 8: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." Or such conclusions are based on the erroneous assumption that, "prayer changes things." Usually, by this expression, is meant that by our prayers we can effect a change in the mind and heart of God. If, for example, it is God's purpose to send to us a sickness which finally results in our death, nevertheless, if we pray earnestly enough, we can change the mind of God so that He heals us rather than brings us through our disease to the grave. This, I say, is erroneous. It is erroneous in the first place, because of the fact that God is the unchangeable One. In Him, the Apostle James says in another place (1: 17), is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. In the second place, if God Himself cannot change, God's counsel cannot change either. God Himself says, through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah (46: 10): "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my good pleasure." God's counsel is unalterable, and all that God has determined in His counsel shall surely come to pass. There is no way in which we can, by our prayers, alter the counsel and good pleasure of God. In the third place, from a subjective point of view, the child of God would not want it any differently. He knows that God's counsel is wise and good. He knows that all that God has determined to do in His counsel is for the good of His church and for the salvation of His people. He knows that God knows far better than we the best way in which to lead His people through the valley of sin and death to the everlasting glory of heaven. And the result is, that the child of God knows that he does not always know what is best for him. And in the consciousness of the fact that he does not always know what is best for him, he commits himself and his

way into the hands of his heavenly Father. He would not dare to presume to be wiser than God. He would not dare to tell God how to direct his life. In fact, if the child of God had even the faintest suspiscion that his prayer changed God's will and counsel, he would never dare to pray again.

But the question remains, why need we pray at all? Why does not God simply give us that which He knows we need without our asking? If He Himself works prayer within our hearts so that every prayer is the fruit of His grace, what good purpose does prayer serve? We must remember on the one hand, that God Himself uses the means of prayer in our lives. God clothes His people with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and brings His people by His Spirit into His own sanctuary. God works prayer within the hearts of His people, but works prayer within their hearts in such a way that these very prayers are used for their salvation. God's people are not stocks and blocks. God gives us that which we seek from Him when we seek these things from Him as rational and moral creatures. And it is only in this way that we learn that what we receive comes from Him alone. Just as a father who knows what his son has need of desires that his son seek these needs from him rather than from the neighbors, so does our heavenly Father desire that we seek all things from His hand. It is in this way that we confess our utter dependence upon Him and commit our way into His gracious care.¹³

Nevertheless, the Apostle James says here that the prayer of a righteous man has much power. This means, in the first place, that our prayers are always answered. Not all the prayers which we make are answered in the way we want them to be answered perhaps. We make many carnal petitions which go unanswered. But James is speaking here of the energized prayer of a righteous man. He is speaking therefore, of a prayer which arises out of the heart of the child of God as the Spirit enables him to make that prayer.

¹³.Note too, what our Heidelberg Catechism says in this connection, L.D. XLV, 116: "Q. Why is prayer necessary for christians? A. Bêcause it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: and also, because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them."

And it can be no different than that that prayer is also answered. How is it possible for God to ignore His own work? God will certainly answer the prayers of His people. In the second place however, there is still more implied. It is clear that James means also to say here that prayer is the means by which the humanly impossible is accomplished. We cannot go into the implications of this at the moment, but shall have to wait with this until we treat more specifically the illustration which James uses of the prayer of Elijah. But it is apparent that the apostle refers to the fact here that through prayer that is accomplished which cannot be accomplished in any other way. This is true in all prayer, but it is especially true of our prayers as they relate to the point which James has in mind and of which he has just spoken. Nevertheless, prayer has the power to accomplish the humanly impossible because the energized prayer of a righteous man is always a prayer according to the will of God.

And if we bear in mind that James is stating this in connection with our calling to pray for one another, this becomes extremely important. We are one together in the household of faith. We live together in the communion and fellowship of the saints in the church on earth. This is one of the greatest of all blessings which the child of God possesses here in the world. But we are all sinful; and our sins constantly get in the way of this fellowship and tear apart this communion. When this happens, the whole life of the child of God is effected. If this fellowship of the saints is to remain strong and blessed therefore, we must confess our faults to one another and pray for one another. And we need not fear but that our prayers will bring about the desired result. When we pray for one another, the bond which unites the believers together will remain strong and unbreakable, and the communion of the saints will flourish. Prayer will take away all the sins which ordinarily would disrupt this fellowship. Then the church will prosper and flourish. The preaching will be mighty and effective in the hearts and the lives of the people of God. The work of the Spirit will proceed through the preaching to the enrichment of the lives of the saints. The bonds of love and unity will be strengthened

and enriched. And our lives, lived so completely out of the church to which we belong, will be blessed. Healing will come from the hand of our God to take away all our spiritual diseases, and goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life until we dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

- Prof. Robert D. Decker -

The whole question of the place or role of women in the church is very much under discussion these days. This discussion occurs within the larger context of society in general. It is the day of the feminist movement and "women's liberation". Women these days are clamoring for a larger place in society and for more responsibility. They are assuming many places which traditionally have belonged exclusively to men, or at least been dominated by men. Women today head large corporations, are in leading positions in education, law, medicine and other professions. Along with this goes the re-evaluation of the traditional roles of husband and wife in the marriage bond. Roles are switched and merged; husband and wife are considered equal partners in a contract or relationship which may be broken at will; they share responsibilities and duties. But whatever their role may be women are not to be considered helps meet for their husbands and husbands are not to be considered the heads of their wives. Wives are not to be in subjection to their own husbands.

All of this has had its impact on the church. This is very obvious from the fact that just a few months ago the annual synods and general assemblies of the churches were very busy discussing and deciding the question of whether women may serve in the offices of the church. This is true of the mainline denominations as well as smaller churches, of both liberal and conservative denominations. Many of these churches are relaxing the traditional (and we believe Biblical) stand which bars women from the offices of the church. The results of this are that women are enrolling in the seminaries in increasing numbers and in some instances (though not without a good bit of controversy) women are being ordained into the office of the ministry of the Word.

Many misconceptions accompany this discussion. It is said by those who advocate women serving in office in the church that to deny them office in the church is to deny their equality with men before God. The text often cited in this connection is Galatians 3: 28 which reads: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (emphasis mine, RDD) The argument

is that if in Christ there be neither male nor female so that both are equal (one) in Christ and if men may occupy office in the church, then surely women may also serve in the ministry or eldership or diaconate. Another deceiving argument which appeals somewhat to sentiment has it that to deny women office is to deny the many gifts and talents which God has given them and this only impoverishes the church. Finally those who take the position that only men may preach and rule and distribute alms in the church are quite generally labelled: "traditionalists" or "narrowminded" and they are accused of regarding women as inferior to men and of less worth in the sight of God.

All this is more than ample reason for us to examine the teaching of the Word of God on this whole subject. Just what must our response be to all these questions and charges? Are they true? Does the New Testament teach that women as well as men are to be ordained into office in the Church? Has the church been wrong all these centuries in restricting the offices to its male members? What specifically is the place of women in the church? What belongs specifically to the woman's calling in God's church? These questions and more are clearly answered in the New Testament Scriptures. In this and perhaps succeeding issues of the Journal we shall examine some of the key passages which speak to the question at hand.

One more point must be made by way of introduction. We assume the inspiration and, therefore, the infallibility of the Bible. What we shall be studying is not the opinion of the human instruments: Paul, Peter, John et. al.; but, it is the very Word of God Himself. Therefore that Word of God preserved in the Scriptures may not be limited in its application to any one historical moment or to a specific culture. The Scriptures reveal eternal truth, truth normative for all ages and cultures. The Biblical norm applies with equal force to the church today as well as it did to the church at the time of the apostles. This needs saying because those who advocate women in office in the church avoid the clear teaching of the New Testament on this point by subjecting the pertinent passages to the principles and methods of the "new hermeneutic." They conclude that the prohibition of women from office in the church was Paul's or Peter's but not God's. Further,

these argue that this applied to the time and culture of the apostolic age but is no longer in force today. Over against this our assumption is that the Bible is God's infallibly inspired Word, normative for all ages. This we believe without shame or apology on the basis of the Bible's own testimony concerning itself (Cf. II Timothy 3: 16, 17; II Peter 1: 16-21) and the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Anyone, therefore, not willing to be convinced by the Scriptures need read no farther.

I Timothy 2: 9-15

This passage reads:

"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."

We must have the general context of this passage clearly in mind if we are to understand the teaching of God's Word concerning the place of women in the church. The Apostle is speaking here of the proper worship of God in and by the church. The entire Epistle deals with this. According to the first chapter Paul is committing a charge to "his own son in the faith", Timothy, the young preacher at Ephesus. (cf. 1: 2, 18) The apostle is concerned that Timothy be instructed, admonished, encouraged in his various tasks and duties as a minister of the Word. In this second chapter Paul speaks of the proper prayers which Timothy and the church must make at worship. They must pray for "all men"; even for "kings and for all that are in authority;". The purpose of praying for men of all classes and stations, even for kings and those in authority is that the church may lead a quiet and peaceable life. (cf. vss. 1-7) What is more, men must do the praying for the Apostle writes: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands,

without wrath and doubting." (vs. 8) That Scripture is speaking of the worship and life of the church is quite obvious from chapter 3. In this latter chapter God's Word speaks of the office of elder and that of deacon. Various requirements are set forth for those who are to be considered fit for these offices in the church. Among other matters it is very plain from chapter 3 that men and not women must serve as elders and deacons in the church. Among other requirements for these offices one is that the elder or deacon "must be the husband of one wife." (3: 2, 12) The passage does not say "the wife of one husband." The whole of chapter 4 speaks of Timothy's work as a preacher and chapter 5 of the proper care of the widows and the way in which the saints are to live together. And, in chapter 6 the charge to Timothy is repeated. Hence, the subject, the general subject, in this Epistle is the church and the offices of the church and the worship and life of the church. The Church as institute is the subject with which Paul deals and that too, especially from the point of view of the tasks which belong to the office of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. The Apostle, this means, is not speaking of the place of women in society or in the home or in marriage. But he speaks of her place in the church, the institute of the church. Failing to understand this we shall conclude with all kinds of absurdities such as: only men may pray, women may never pray or only men may teach their children; women may not or women may never speak but must always remain in silence. This obviously cannot be the sense or thrust of the passage.

Bearing this in mind we turn to vs. 9 and 10 which speak of the proper adornment of the women of God. The main verb of verse 9 must be supplied from the previous verse where the Apostle writes: "I will therefore that men pray..." The text reads then: "In like manner also, I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel..." The term "apparel" in the Greek is used only in the New Testament. It literally means: a letting down, lowering; hence, a garment let down, dress or attire. A. T. Robertson offers this translation: "a letting down of demeanor, or dress, or arrangement of dress." (Word Pictures In The New Testament, vol. IV, p. 569) That "apparel" must be "modest". This term

means: well arranged or harmonious arrangement and, therefore, modest, seemly, becoming decorum, well ordered. In other words the woman must always but especially when she comes to worship be adorned with proper clothing, clothing which befits a godly woman. And modesty is the key here. The woman of God must not be decked out in the alluring, tempting fashions of the world which appeal to the sinful and lustful passions of men. Very simply her dress must reflect the fact that she is a Christian who is "not of this world."

This modest apparel must be accompanied with "shamefacedness". The idea of this term is that of a sense of shame. Interestingly enough we find it used in the sense of "reverence" in Hebrews 12: 28. Trench says the idea is: "moral repugnance to the doing of a dishonorable act...shamefastness, or pudency, which shrinks from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty, as well as from the dishonor which would justly attach thereto." (Richard C. Trench, Synonyms of The New Testament, XIX, XX) This further strengthens the idea of "modest apparel." Godly women are enjoined to be modest, orderly and reserved in their dress and appearance. They must refrain from any adornment which would be considered indecent or which would incite the sinful passions and which thus would make them the objects of shame. Belonging to this shamefacedness is "sobriety" or literally, "soundness of mind." In plain words, a godly woman must adorn herself sanely or with sanctified good sense. This will yield proper self-control in her dress.

In this way, the Apostle wills that women: "adorn themselves." The verb means: to put in order, to arrange, make ready or prepare and thus to ornament or adorn. That which enhances the beauty of a godly woman; that which is her ornament must be modest apparel, shamefacedness and sobriety. Thus she must appear in all her life.

And this means her adornment may not include: "...broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." These are precluded by modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety. "Broided hair" is that which is woven, plaited, or twisted together. This prohibition against braided hair has sounded somewhat harsh to many. We should

understand that the Apostle is not forbidding braids as such. The general principle of the two verses must be borne in mind as it is expressed in verse 10. The godly woman must remember that her adornment (that which makes her beautiful) is not something outward but it's inward, viz. good works. Not only so but braids in that day were not as braids are today. The braided hair of the Apostle's day was fastened by jewelled combs or by pins of ivory or silver or bronze with jewelled heads. Braids in those days often represented great fortunes. The more expensive they were the better. They were, therefore, articles of luxury. The Scripture warns women of God not to indulge in such extravagance. And for good reason! Such costly ornamentation on a woman would mark her not as godly but as a woman of the world. For that same reason her adornment must not be gold. Literally "golden ornaments or precious jewels made of gold" must not be the means of adornment. These too were very costly symbols of wealth. They were indicative of the vain glory of the world rather than the modesty and sobriety of godliness. In this same way we must understand the forbidding of pearls. At that time these were obtained from the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean. They were fabulously priced so that they were well beyond the reach (purchasing power) of the average church member. More than that these pearls were coveted by the very wealthy women of the world. Finally, the adornment of the godly woman must not include the "costly array". This was clothing (according to the Greek: the cloak or mantle) which required a great outlay of money. It was clothing of surpassing value and of highest excellence. Only the rich could afford it. Such clothing immediately indicated great wealth. It must not be the object of the seeking or striving of the women of God.

In contrast with these adornments which characterize the ungodly the woman of God must be adorned with good works. These are works which proceed out of true and living faith, are in harmony with God's law, and which are performed to the glory of God. These good works are according to the text that "which becometh a woman professing godliness." This kind of adornment is becoming or seemly for a godly woman. It befits a woman of God. Such a

woman announces or publicly professes reverence toward God. Her adornment must be in keeping with her Christian confession. The expensive and alluring adornments of the world simply do not fit in with godliness. They are not a proper expression of the profession of a woman of the church of Jesus Christ.

Scripture emphasizes this same point in a different context in I Peter 3: 3-6 where we read:

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

In this context Scripture is speaking of the marriage relationship and the callings of husbands and wives over against each other in the bond of marriage. Wives must be in subjection to their own husbands. Even if a wife be married to an unbeliever she must stay with him in the hope that he may be won by her "chaste conversation" (manner of living). The adorning of such a godly wife must be the hidden man of the heart, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. This is the way godly women of old adorned themselves being in subjection to their own husbands. Sarah is cited as the example for all women of God. She obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. This means that the adorning of a godly woman must not be outward consisting of plaiting the hair, wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel. While the point of view may differ and have reference to the marriage relationship, the principle is the same. The adorning of a woman of God must befit her Christian confession. It must be inward and spiritual. Meekness, quietness of spirit, modesty, shamefacedness and sobriety, in one word, good works must be the mark of the women of God's church. Herein lies her beauty.

Women thus adorned have a beautiful and unique place in the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to verse 12 of I Timothy 2, that calling is "not to teach, nor to usurp authority over

the man, but to be in silence." When the text speaks of teaching the reference is to the official teaching of the Word by the Church. In other words the text means the preaching of the Word. In the clearest of language the inspired apostle forbids women to occupy the pulpit of the sanctuary or the lecturn of the catechism room. A woman may not be ordained into the office of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Nor may the woman usurp authority over the man. This term means to act on one's own authority, to be autocratic and in this sense to exercise dominion over the man. Once again, let it be emphasized, Scripture means in the church. The woman may not occupy the ruling office of Christ in the church, that of the elder. And, a woman who does is a usurper! She acts on her own authority, not on the authority of the King of the church. In that case she domineers in a sphere in which she does not belong. This is not her place in the Church; it does not belong to her God-given calling in the church. This is the plain and simple meaning of this text. There is nothing hard or difficult to grasp. To take another position and defend it on the basis of this passage is utterly impossible. In fact, we make bold to say, to take another position one must necessarily twist or distort or deny altogether the Scripture at this point.

Perhaps one might object to this position. The question is often asked: "Did not women occupy office in the Old Testament church?" The answer is affirmative. No one who knows even a little of the Bible would deny that there were prophetesses such as Hulda and leaders of armies like Deborah. It is certainly striking, however, that whenever this occurred it was during very bad times in the history of Israel. It was during times of great apostasy as in the time of the Judges "when every man did that which was right in his own eyes" or as just before the judgment of the Captivity of Judah by Babylon. In these times of lawlessness and false prophets, idolatry and fellowship with the heathen things became so bad that there were no men (much to their shame!) fit for office and God had to raise up godly women to lead His people. It is also true that these instances are not the general rule but very obviously the exception, and quite rare at that.

But even apart from this I Timothy two speaks plainly enough. God says in this passage of His Word: 1) Women may not teach and 2) they may not be in authority over the man in the church.

Rather they must "learn in silence." (vs 11) Women must learn. They must increase their knowledge. They must learn the truth and grow in the knowledge of God as He is revealed in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Word and by His Spirit. This means they must learn by means of the preaching of the Word and its teaching. Rather than preaching, i.e., occupying the office of the ministry of the Word, they must learn. And, they must learn in silence. Strikingly the passage mentions this "in silence" twice; first in verse 11 and again in verse 12. This must have the emphasis. The Apostle wants to be very sure that the church understands that women are to learn in silence. That term means a little more than merely refraining from speaking. A better translation might be, "in quietness". This is precisely how the same word is translated in II Thessalonians 3: 12: "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness (emphasis mine, R.D.) they work, and eat their own bread." These "that are such" are the disorderly busy-bodies mentioned in the previous verse. Hence the idea of the "in quietness" is that of tending to one's own affairs and not meddling in the things of others. This is the force of the term in I Timothy 2 as well. That women must learn in silence means they are to mind their own business in the church. Women are not to meddle into those affairs of His church which God has assigned to the men. In silence they are to learn, tending to their own task and calling.

Still more, they must learn "with all subjection"; literally, "in the sphere of all subjection". This only strengthens the idea of the "in silence"; it must be the silence of all subjection. This noun is derived from the verb which means to arrange under, to subordinate. The woman must arrange herself under or subordinate herself. And it is to be in ALL subjection. In the sphere of total, complete obedience the woman must learn. Hence the idea is that the woman must be in total subjection; she must arrange herself under the will of God. God has clearly declared His will

concerning the place of women in the church. The woman, therefore, must not teach or usurp authority over the man but learn in quietness, but not because she is forced to do that by the mores of society or the community of believers, not grudgingly, nor half-heartedly, nor indifferently and certainly not with a suppressed rebellious attitude. Rather, the woman must assume her place in the church in complete obedience to the will of God as expressed in His Word.

In sum then verses 11 and 12 teach that the woman may not occupy either the office of minister of the Word or that of the elder, the ruling office. The verses do not mean that woman may never teach or speak. They must teach their children. This belongs to the "childbearing" mentioned in verse 15. They must rule them too, and demand obedience from their children. But woman may not preach or teach or rule IN THE CHURCH. In the church men must pray and men must teach and men must rule -- that's their office. Women must follow; they must learn in quietness and they must obey in total subjection to the will of God.

Positively, the passage speaks of the woman's calling in the words: "...she shall be saved in childbearing..." (vs. 15) This, in our sex-crazy, lawless, lustful world, needs all the emphasis we can muster. This is THE calling of Christian women! God in His inscrutable wisdom does not give this privilege to all women of the church. Some married women are childless and other women remain unmarried. These too have a calling in the church. They must according to this very context be adorned with good works. They must together with all believers "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep themselves unspotted from the world." (cf. James 1: 26, 27) But this childbearing is the general rule for godly women. This includes the actual conception and the giving of birth to children and all the rearing of them. As helps meet (fit) for their husbands (Gen. 1: 18ff.) and in subjection to their own husbands as to the Lord (Eph. 5: 22-24) women are called to bear and to bring up children. The Lord provides ample opportunity for mothers in Israel to teach and to rule! They must instruct their little ones both by word and example of life in the way of the fear of the Lord. In the

love of Jesus Christ they must rule them which includes correcting and admonishing them when they fall into sin.

And, it's in this way, the way of childbearing that the woman shall be saved! This is one of the most amazing statements in all Scripture. Childbearing is the way of the salvation of the women of God's church! This does not mean that women are saved because of or on the basis of their bearing of children. The woman as well as the man is saved by the merits, the blood of Jesus. And this salvation is effected through the means of faith by which she as well as the man is bound to Jesus Christ. But salvation for women is THROUGH childbearing nonetheless. In other words, in the way of this is the salvation of women. Not in the way of teaching in the church; not in the way of usurping authority over the man in the church, but by the grace of God through the means of God given faith in Christ IN THE WAY OF CHILD-BEARING the woman is saved. This is the path of righteousness for the women of God's church. This is the way of thankfulness for them. Here is the way of the will of God for women. If the godly woman wishes an answer to the question: "what wilt thou have me to do?", the answer of the Lord is, "bear children." This, childbearing, is the freedom with which Christ has made godly women free.

And what a glorious calling that is. In fact it may safely be said that there is NOTHING more glorious, more blessed, more wonderful than this for a woman. Glorious is this calling because through childbearing God brings His church into the world. This is the unique and blessed privilege of women. In this way Christ came into the world. God did not need a man to bring His Son into the world, but He did use a woman. Christ was born of a woman. And it had to be this way. Christ could have come no other way. Only thus could He assume our human nature and could He in that human nature atone for our sins by satisfying the justice of God. This is literally the teaching of Scripture in Gal. 4: 4, 5:

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Moreover, it is through the childbearing of godly women that the Body of our Lord is brought into the world. Just think of that! What could be more blessed for women than to be used of the Lord for the building of His church? Unto this end and for this purpose God has created the woman, and unto this end God has fitted the woman physically, emotionally, and spiritually. God blesses women unto this end with many wonderful gifts and talents and virtues (many of which men are not given). Thus it is that in childbearing the woman finds true fulfillment. This is her unique joy, her greatest blessedness. What a heinous sin (and this too needs saying in our times) when women and men with them refuse that glorious calling; when men and women arbitrarily limit the size of their families or have no children at all. What is even worse is the great plague of abortion which sweeps the world these days by which hundreds of thousands of human beings are murdered in cold blood before they even see the light of day. On account of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience! Of that we may be sure! Also in this respect they that live by the sword shall die by the sword.

These verses teach therefore:

1) Women may not teach in the church nor usurp authority over the man in the church. They must learn in quietness tending to their own affairs.

2) Their own affairs, their unique calling and glorious task, is to bear children.

Upon what ground or basis is this true? Verses 13 and 14 present a twofold ground:

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

Notice the clear connection here. "For" (that's because) "Adam was first formed, then Eve." This is the reason why woman may neither teach nor usurp authority over the man in the church. Adam was formed first and then Eve. This brings us back to the beginning of things in creation. That Adam was formed first and then Eve means that the woman was created for the sake of the man. The man was not created for the sake of the woman, but the latter

was created for the man's sake! This is God's order of things and for a woman to teach or usurp authority over the man is to turn around God's order. This is literally stated in the Bible too, for we read in I Corinthians 11: 8, 9: "For 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." This truth is also evident from the narrative of the creation of the woman in Genesis 2: 18-25:

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

For Adam there was not found an help meet for him. Thus God caused the deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took one of his ribs and of the rib made the woman and brought her to the man and they were one flesh. The meaning is plain. Adam by himself lacked something; he was incomplete. Eve as created by God out of the man made up that incompleteness. Taken out of the man she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. She makes his life complete and is the help fit for him. She was created, therefore, for the sake of the man. For this reason she may not teach or usurp authority over the man in the church.

The second reason is stated in verse 14: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." This cannot be taken absolutely as if Adam did not sin or fall, but only the woman. Rather the idea is that Adam was not deceived in the way that the woman was deceived. Eve was utterly, completely deceived. She became the leader into the fall. She should

not even have listened to Satan. She should either have dismissed him or referred him to her head, Adam. But she really assumed Adam's place and listened to Satan directly (Adam did not), she sinned before Adam did. She was the leader and he was the follower. Hence Eve was utterly deceived. She reversed God's order and became the leader into sin instead of the follower of righteousness. As a consequence God said: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children (think of the anguishing pain of childbirth); and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen. 3: 16)

For this double reason; the prior creation of Adam and the deception of the woman, the woman may not teach or usurp authority over the man. Rather her salvation lies in the way of childbearing.

How is that unique calling of the woman realized? Not merely in the bearing of children. Ungodly women bear children too but are not saved. Not in that in itself. But in silence with all subjection bearing children in faith, charity, sanctification with sobriety. (cf. vs. 15) In faith means in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Persevering in faith the woman bears children for Christ's sake and the glory of God. In charity or love too she must bear children. This is the bond of perfectness. Because she is loved of God and loves God she bears children. She does so also in sanctification. This is holiness, piety. And with sobriety she realizes her calling. She controls, does the godly woman, her sinful passions. Childbearing it is in faith and love and sober holiness for the Lord's sake.

This is the blessedness of the godly woman. Here is her freedom. The freedom of "women's liberation" is only the horrible slavery of sin. This is the freedom with which Christ has made the woman of His church free! This is the joy of motherhood celebrated by the psalmist, the joy of salvation and eternal life. It ought to be obvious too that this cannot mean the woman is inferior or of less worth than the man in God's church. In Christ indeed there is neither male nor female. Both share in the blessings of salvation! (cf. Gal. 3: 28) Thus the woman fulfills God's purpose.

The blessings are strong homes and families, strong churches and the Name of God is glorified.

There is one more word that needs saying. The Apostle writes: "But I suffer not a woman to teach..." (vs. 12) I do not give leave, I do not allow this. This is not just Paul's personal opinion, nor is it some of his advice for that church at that time. This is Paul the Apostle speaking. Paul, the Apostle who claims: "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not..." (vs. 7) Hence, this is the word of Paul as inspired by the Holy Spirit. All of which is to say this is GOD'S WORD. The Apostle speaks with divine authority. This is an utterly crucial point for this means that this word is not culturally or historically conditioned as so many have it. Neither is the Apostle following rabbinical methods here. This does not just apply to the congregation of Ephesus at that time in history so that now we may ignore this word and ordain women as preachers and ruling elders in the church. This is God's Word; inspired and infallible. It expresses God's eternal will concerning the glorious place of women in the church. And, it applies, therefore, with equal force in all cultures and at all times. Here and now too!

This passage teaches in language even little children can understand:

- 1) Women may neither teach nor rule in God's church.
- 2) Their unique, blessed calling is rather to bear children in faith to God's glory.
- 3) Thus they must learn in quietness with all subjection.

To take any other position one is forced to twist, distort or deny this passage of God's Word altogether. It is to say of necessity that the Apostle Paul did not speak the truth in Christ but he lied when he wrote this.

I for one do not dare to say this.