

Epistle 320

by George Fox

George Fox's Epistle 320 highlights the essential role of women in spiritual service and their equality with men in the church's mission.

Scripture: Exodus 35:25, Numbers 11:26, 1 Samuel 1:24, 1 Samuel 2:1, Ezekiel 39:29, Joel 2:28, Acts 2:15, Romans 7:12, Philippians 4:3, 2 Timothy 2:21, Hebrews 2:10, 1 Peter 2:5

Topics: "Women In Ministry", "Faithful Service"

Description

George Fox preaches about the significant roles of women in the Old Testament and the importance of women's involvement in the work and service of the Lord in both the time of the law and the gospel. He highlights various examples of honorable and faithful women such as Deborah, Esther, Abigail, and Ruth, who played crucial roles in preserving their families and communities. Fox emphasizes the need for women to be diligent, faithful, and active in serving God, teaching their families, and preventing evil through their wisdom, virtue, and faithfulness.

Transcript

Friends,--You may read in the old world, how one family after another, till Noah's time, served the Lord God. And then from Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their wives, and after Moses and Aaron had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and that they were come to be a great people, Moses said, 'I would all the Lord's people were prophets.' Numb. xi. 29. And when a young man said unto Moses, 'Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp;' and he would have had Moses to forbid them: but Moses answered and said unto him again, 'Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them [Num 11:26-29].'

So Moses here, (who was captain, governor, and judge over Israel,) was far from restraining any from prophesying in the camp, but reprov'd his envy that would have had him forbid them; and did moreover encourage them, by saying, 'I would to God all the Lord's people were prophets:' and surely all the Lord's people are made up of both men and women.

And the Lord having given his law to the children of Israel, which was holy, just and good [Rom 7:12], the Lord said, 'I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel [Ezek 39:29]: so that by this spirit, they might understand his law, which was spiritual.' Ezek. xxxix. 29.

Now in the time of the law, there were the assemblies of the women; for all the women that were wise of heart, did work with their hands about those holy things which God had commanded.

And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom, these women wrought about those holy things that belonged to the tabernacle and sanctuary [Exo 35:25f]; as you may see in Exod. xxxv.

And likewise the assemblies of the women, in the 38th chapter, and of the women's assembling at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation [Exo 38:8]; and in the margin it is said, they assembled by troops.

Now, here you may see, that the women were in the work and service of God, as well as the men; and they had their assemblies. For God had poured out his spirit upon the house of Israel, to give them an understanding [Job 32:8], both men and women, to do that, and make those things which God had commanded, which were called holy things; which were but figures and shadows of the substance, Christ Jesus, the holy one [Col 2:17].

Now Moses and Aaron, and the seventy elders [Num 11:16,25], did not say to those assemblies of the women, we can do our work ourselves, and you are more fit to be at home to wash the dishes; or such-like expressions; but they did encourage them in the work and service of God, in those things which God had commanded them in the time of the law.

For God having poured his spirit on the house of Israel, to give them an understanding, to do those things which God had commanded them; by which spirit their hearts were stirred up to do God's work, both males and females.

And in the time of the law, the women were to offer up sacrifices and offerings, as well as the men, upon God's altar; as you may see, Hannah when she brought Samuel and offered him up to the Lord, she brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, and when she brought him, she took up with her three bullocks, besides flour and wine [1 Sam 1:24]: so see how she paid her vows to the Lord, and offered up her sacrifices upon God's altar. And other places might be shown of the women's offerings and sacrifices.

And you may see Hannah's fervent zeal to God, and what a large speech she made in magnifying and exalting the Lord [1 Sam 2:1-10], in 1 Sam. 1st and 2d chapters.

And so you may see, the offerings and sacrifices of the women were accepted upon God's altar, as well as the men's.

But the hire of a whore was not to be brought into the house of God for any vow, for it was an abomination to the Lord [Deut 23:18]. Deut. xxiii. 10.

Now Hannah's husband, and the other women's husbands, that offered up their offerings upon God's altar, were not offended at them, nor did they say, their offerings were enough for them both; but every one was to offer up their peace-offerings and thanksgiving-offerings themselves, and other offerings.

So here you may see the service and work of the women, and how serviceable the women were in their assemblies in the time of the law, about the tabernacle and holy things, and how the women offered upon God's altar, as well as the men; they had their liberty. But the hire of the whore was to be kept out of God's house, and not to be offered up upon God's altar.

So you may see man and woman were meet-helpers in paradise [Gen 2:18], before the fall; and death reigned from Adam till Moses [Rom 5:14], and after Moses received the law from God, which went over death, (and sin that brought it,) who saw the state of man and woman in paradise: men and women in the time of the law were meet-helpers again to one another, in the work and service of the holy things about the tabernacle and sanctuary, and the women had their assemblies.

And it is said, in Joel ii. and in Acts ii. 'that the Lord would pour out of his spirit upon all flesh in the last days [Joel 2:28, Acts 2:15] or times.'

So this spirit being poured upon all flesh in the christian times, sons and daughters, handmaids and servants, old men and young men, that by the spirit of God, all these might have his visions, prophecies and dreams: and this is his spirit, by which all should profit in the things that be eternal, and to serve God in the spirit, both men and women, sons and daughters, old men and young men, handmaids and servants; all offer up to God his spiritual sacrifices [1 Pet 2:5].

For all being dead in old earthly Adam [1 Cor 15:22], Christ, the heavenly Adam [1 Cor 15:47] has tasted death for them all [Heb 2:9], and is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world [1 Jn 2:2], and he enlightens all [John 1:9], and his grace hath appeared unto all [Tit 2:11], and his spirit is poured upon all flesh, and his gospel, which is the power of God [Rom 1:16], is preached to every creature under heaven [Col 1:23].

And now, must not all receive the grace, and believe in the light, and receive this gospel, and walk and labour in it, both men and women, sons and daughters, old men and young, servants and handmaids.

Yea, I say, the gospel being preached to all nations, and to every creature under heaven, old men and young, servants and handmaids, sons and daughters; I say, then must not all these receive this gospel, and the light and grace? and are they not all to walk in it? and to offer up their spiritual sacrifices [1 Pet 2:5] upon the heavenly altar, in the new covenant, and to walk in the new and living way [Heb 10:20]; and all to receive the light of Christ, which enlightens all; and to become children of light [John 12:36], and to feel the blood of Christ to cleanse them from all sin [1 Jn 1:7], which they have in old Adam.

So as the women were to offer, in the old covenant, and in the time of the law, upon the outward altar, their offerings; and God poured out his spirit upon the house of Israel, that they might understand, and do what he commanded them: at which time they had the assemblies of the women, which were not forbidden.

So now, in the time of the gospel, and the day of Christ, which enlightens all, and in the time of his grace, which hath appeared unto all men, to teach them, and to bring their salvation; and in the time of his gospel preached to every creature, and in the time of his pouring out of his spirit upon all flesh, that they might understand, and walk, and live in his gospel, and by his spirit offer up their spiritual sacrifices.

So, in this the time and day of Christ, the captain of our salvation [Heb 2:10], must not all these labour in the gospel [Phil 4:3], and in the word, and in the grace, and in the light, and know and do God and Christ's work and service about his heavenly tabernacle and sanctuary? Hath not every one their service that are enlightened? And his grace, that hath appeared unto them [Tit 2:11], are they not stewards of it [1 Pet 4:10]? And must not they have their assemblies of the women in the time of the gospel, and of the new covenant, and in the time of grace, and light, and life, as well as in the time of the law, and of the old covenant?

And are not all to labour in that which tends to God's glory, and praise, and honour? For which end he hath made them all, and for which end he hath redeemed them, and converted them, and translated and sanctified them, to make them vessels of his honour [2 Tim 2:21], and of his grace and mercies [Rom 9:23].

And so now the end of all our men's and women's meetings in the time of the gospel, (the power of Christ being the authority of them,) is, that they might all labour in his power, and in his grace, and in his spirit, and in his light, to do his service, and his business in truth and righteousness.

So the women in the time of the gospel, light, and grace, are to look into their own selves and families, and to look to the training up of their children; for they are oft-times more amongst them than the men, and may prevent many things that may fall out, and many times they may make or mar their children in their education.

So now they come to be exercised in the grace of God, and to admonish and exhort, reprove and rebuke [2 Tim 4:2], and to keep all their families modest, honest, virtuous, sober, and civil, and not to give liberty, nor indulge that which tends to vice, or lasciviousness, or any evil, or idleness, or slothfulness, or the fashions of the world, which pass away [1 Cor 7:31]; and to stop all vain words, and idle talking, and stories, and tales, which are unprofitable; but rather to turn their ears to godliness, which they should be trained up and exercised in [1 Tim 4:7f], and not to fulfil the lust of the eye; for that being satisfied, brings the pride of life, and then comes the lust of the flesh; and this is not of the Father, but of the world [1 Jn 2:16].

And if either men or women suffer such things, they suffer that which defiles their children and families; and therefore such things are to be reprov'd in families, and their children to be stopped from going into such things. And therefore they are to have an esteem of truth and virtue above all such things, and not to indulge any such things as will draw out their minds from virtue to vice.

Now when the women are met together in the light, and in the gospel, the power of God; some are of a more large capacity and understanding than other women, and are able to inform, and instruct, and stir up others into diligence, virtue, and righteousness, and godliness, and, in the love and wisdom of God, to inform and reform their families, and to help them that be of weaker capacities and understandings in the wisdom of God, that they may be fruitful in every good work [Col 1:10] and word.

So that they may see that all their families are ordered to God's glory; and that which tends to looseness or evil, either in words, ways, or actions, that would corrupt them, either in their lives or manners, may be kept down and reprov'd.

So that all their children and servants may be trained up in the fear of God [Psa 34:11/Prov 22:6], in the new covenant; for among the Jews in the old covenant, they that sojourn'd amongst them were to keep the sabbath [Lev 25:6], and if they did eat of their sacrifice, they were to be circumcised [Exo 12:48].

And the women had their assemblies in the days of the judges and the kings; and old Ely's sons abused them [1 Sam 2:22], and old Ely did admonish his sons, but he did not restrain them from their wickedness; and therefore God cut off his sons, and he lost the ark of God, and the priesthood, and his own life also [1 Sam 2 - 4].

So many of you may admonish your children, but if ye do not restrain them by the help of the spirit of God, which God hath given to you, you will quench the spirit of God [1 Th 5:19] in you, by indulging them; so by that you will lose your spiritual offering, and your priesthood therein; and take heed if you do not lose your own lives, and your children's also; therefore mind old Ely for your example.

Now old Ely was not against the assemblies of the women, who assembled by troops, as (in the margin of the bible) you may see, 1 Sam. ii. 21, 22. though some men now-a-days may be against women's meetings or assemblies in the gospel-times, and against women's speaking or prophesying, but they are ignorant of the universal spirit, and of their service and labour to God, in his grace and gospel, and are of a narrow spirit, and are not the true servers of God themselves; for if they were, they would have all people to serve God in his power, and to keep the true religion, which is to visit the fatherless and the widows, and to keep themselves from the spots of the world [Jas 1:27].

And some there have been, that would not have the women to meet without the men; and some of them say, the women must not speak in the church [1 Cor 14:34f], and if they must not speak, what should they meet with them for?

But what spirit is this, that would exercise lordship [Mark 10:42, Luke 22:25] over the faith of any? And what a spirit is this, that will neither suffer the women to speak amongst the men, nor to meet amongst themselves to speak?

But all this is for judgment, with that spirit that gives liberty unto all that labour in the gospel, in the light, and in the grace.

And some men and women there are that suggest, if women should meet (by themselves) in the order of the gospel, the power of God, they would be too high: but such men and women, as so suggest, are too high already, and would be ruling over men and women's possessions, and waste their own; for if they were in the power and spirit of God, they need not fear any one's getting over them. For the power and spirit of God gives liberty to all; for women are heirs of life as well as the men, and heirs of grace, and of the light of Christ Jesus, as well as the men, and so stewards of the manifold grace of God [1 Pet 4:10].

And they must all give an account of their stewardship [Luke 16:2], and are to be possessors of life, and light, and grace, and the gospel of Christ, and to labour in it; and to keep their liberty and freedom in it, as well as the men.

And they are believers in the light, as well as the men, and so children of the light and of the day [John 12:36, 1 Th 5:5], as well as the men.

And so the assemblies of the women, whom God hath poured out his spirit upon, are to be in the time of the gospel, as well as in the time of the law, that they may be helps-meet to the men in the time of the gospel, in the restoration, as they were in the beginning, and time of the law.

So all the women, (in all their assemblies in the time of the gospel, and of the new covenant of light, life, and grace,) are to be encouraged, as they were in the time of the law, and to be stirred up in the wisdom of God to their diligence and service of God and Christ, in his new covenant, in his gospel time, to do the Lord's business about the heavenly tabernacle, and heavenly garments, as the women were about the figure in the time of the law.

And now, you that stumble at women's meetings, had not your women many vain meetings before they were convinced, and you were not then offended at them, when they met to satisfy the flesh, and had junketing meetings to themselves; did you reprove them for such meetings?

And why should they not now meet in their conversion, in the Lord's power and spirit, to do his business, and to visit the fatherless and widows, and to keep themselves from the spots of the world, which is the practice of the pure religion, [Jas 1:27] wherein the men and women may be helps-meet in the religion that is not of the world, that keeps from the spots of the world.

But some have said, that such meetings must not be, but as business requires or occasions them. As much as to say, you must not make up the hedges [Ezek 13:5, 22:30?] till the beasts have devoured your corn; and then the parish overseers must meet together to compute the damage. And here their wisdom is seen, as if it were not more their duty to meet, to prevent bad actions that may fall out, and with the power of God to stop up gaps [Ezek 13:5, 22:30?] to prevent evil, or weak places; for when the evil is entered into, it is too late to meet then, which rather brings scandal than remedy; and therefore the labourers in the gospel, men and women, (being helps-meet,) are to see that all walk and live in the order of the gospel, and to see that nothing be lacking [1 Th 4:12], then all is well. For the women in their assemblies may inform one another of the poor widows and fatherless, and in the wisdom of God may find the best way for the setting forth of their children; and to see that their children are preserved [Jer 49:11] in truth, and to instruct them in the fear of the Lord [Psa 34:11].

And you may see the care of Abraham, about Isaac taking his wife; and the care of Sarah, that the son of the bondwoman should not be heir with her son [Gen 21:10], and how that he sent his servant, that spoke to the parents, before he spoke to Rebecca the daughter, concerning the message of his master Abraham, and they confessed it did proceed from the Lord [Gen 24], as in Gen. xxiv.

And also you may see the care of Rebecca concerning Jacob, who said, 'If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, what good will my life do me? [Gen 27:46]'

And here you may see Isaac and Rebecca were helps-meet; and Isaac did not say, hold thy tongue, thou foolish woman. For Isaac exhorted Jacob, and charged him, not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan [Gen 28:1]; as you may see in Gen. xxvii.

And when Rebecca was with child, the children struggled in her womb, and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to the Lord to inquire, and the Lord said unto her, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people, and the elder shall serve the younger [Gen 25:23],' &c. as in Gen. xxv.

So you may see, that she had recourse to the Lord, and inquired of the Lord, and he heard her and spoke to her, and she heard the Lord's voice. She is an example to all women in that condition, to ask counsel of the Lord, as she did.

And when Sarah said to Abraham, 'Cast forth the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac;' but this thing was grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son Ishmael. But God said unto Abraham, 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight, because of the lad, and because of the bondwoman; for in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called [Gen 21:10-12; Heb 11:18, Rom 9:7].'

Here you may see God justified this honourable woman's speaking, and her husband Abraham did according to her words [Gen 21:14], as in Gen. xxi. for the church was in Abraham's house at that time; and so Sarah spoke in the church.

And you may see the counsel of Rebecca to Jacob, and how she instructed her son, in chap xxvii, &c.

And likewise you may see Rachel and Leah their counsel to Jacob, who answered Jacob, and said unto him, 'Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him as strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money; for all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's; and now therefore, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do [Gen 31:14-16].' This was Rachel's and Leah's counsel unto Jacob; and were not these three a church then? And did he forbid them from speaking in the church? see Gen. xxxi. 14, 15, 16.

And in Exodus i. there you may see the midwives, which feared God, did not obey king Pharaoh's command, in destroying the male children, but saved them alive.

And after that the king of Egypt sent for the midwives, and asked them, 'Why they had done so, in saving the male children?' Yet these midwives, after he had thus examined them, and re-enforced his command, yet they still disobeyed his command, and would not yield to his persecuting, murdering decree; and therefore it is said, God dealt well with the midwives.

'And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses [Exo 1:15-21].'

And here you may see the Lord took care for these honourable women that feared him.

And do ye think that these honourable women did not meet often together, and took counsel together, to stand together, and adventure their own lives and estates to preserve the lives of those male children? Would you not say, if this were in your days, that these were bold women to answer the king after such a manner, and to disobey the king's commands thus? as in Exod. i.

And after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and saw the destruction of Pharaoh and his host; after Moses made an end of his song, and praising of the Lord, then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances, (mark, all the women,) and Miriam answered them, and said, 'Sing ye unto the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he overthrown in the sea,' &c. [Exo 15:20f]

Now, here you may see what an assembly there was of the women, that praised the Lord, who were instructed by Miriam the prophetess; and Moses and Aaron were not offended at them; for they were sensible of their joy, and were partakers of the deliverance and salvation, the women as well as the men; as you may see in Exod. xv.

And Deborah, a prophetess, judged Israel, and sent to Baruch and exhorted and encouraged him; and she prophesied to him that he should not have the glory of the battle; but that the Lord should sell Sisera into the hands of a woman [Judg 4]; as you may see in Judges iv. v. chap.

Then sung Deborah and praised the Lord; and there you may see her large declaration, in praising and magnifying the name of the Lord, the whole chapter throughout; and how she said, 'Blessed be Jael above all women, the wife of Heber; blessed shall she be in the tent,' &c [Judg 5]. And we do not read that the elders did reprove her, or bid her hold her prating; for she was filled with the power of the Lord to praise

his name. Judges v.

And you may see how the apostle set forth the honourable women, and their faithfulness and constancy, who by faith received the dead, raised to life again [Heb 11:35], Heb. xi. 35.

And Hannah, who prayed in the temple before Ely, as aforesaid, who was ignorant of her condition, he reproved her, and thought she had been drunk; but she convinced him; so that at last he encouraged her, and desired the Lord to grant her petition: and when the Lord had granted it to her, you may see how this honourable woman exalts the Lord [1 Sam 1:9-2:10], 1 Sam. ii. 1 to the 10th.

And Ruth and Naomi, you may see what virtuous women they were, and how the women blessed the Lord on their behalf [Ruth 4:14], and how they declared of the goodness of the Lord to them.

And Huldah the prophetess, who dwelt in Jerusalem, in the college, where the king sent out the priest Hilkiah, and his scribe, and others, to inquire of her. Now the Jews here did not despise communication with a woman. And she instructed the priest and the king's scribe, who came to her.

So neither king nor priest did despise this prophetess's teaching and instruction, but obeyed it, as you may see what a large sermon she preached to them [1 Ki 22:14-20], in 2 Kings, xxii. from 14 to the end.

And you may see Abigail, that honourable woman's wisdom, how she saved her family and her house from destruction. Yet she did not go to ask her husband (old churlish Nabal) at home [1 Cor 14:35], but she, who was innocent and wise, took it upon herself; and you may see what a brave sermon she preached to David, who heard her patiently; and she told David, how that 'he was bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord God.' And David blessed the Lord God that she came to him, and said, 'the Lord God of Israel had sent her that day to meet him;' and said, 'Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou who hast kept me this day from shedding blood [1 Sam 25];' as you may read in 1 Sam. xxv. And was not this a noble and honourable act of this woman, which prevented so much evil and bloodshed, which her husband had like to have brought upon them? So David did not despise the counsel of this honourable woman, who was wiser than her husband Nabal.

And now, must not the virgins, in the time of the gospel, trim their lamps, and get oil into their own lamps, by labouring in the grace, light, and power of Christ, and keep their lamps trimmed and always burning [Mat 25:1-10].

In the time of the law it was Aaron the priest's office; but in the time of the gospel all the virgin minds must trim their lamps, that their lamps may burn the clearer; and to see that they have oil in their lamps from the heavenly olive tree, Christ Jesus [Rom 11:17].

And therefore, they that would not have the virgins and women to be diligent, serving the Lord in his heavenly business and service, their lamps are going out, and they are become fools, and would have others like themselves.

And the Lord sent Elijah in the time of the famine, and said unto him, 'Behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee;' and he arose, and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, the widow woman was gathering sticks to make a fire, to bake her a cake, who had but one handful of meal and a little oil in a cruise, and yet in faith she made the man of God a cake, though she had no more than this, that she and her son might eat and then die; but her meal wasted not, nor her cruise of oil, according to the word of the Lord; and so the Lord blessed this woman [1 Ki 17:9-16], as you may see in 1

Kings xvii.

And in the 2d of Kings and the 4th, there you may see the faith of the widow woman, and how largely she spoke unto the prophet Elisha, and how the Lord increased her stock of oil through her belief and faithfulness [2 Ki 4:1-10].

And Elisha passed unto Shunnim, where there was a great woman, and she constrained him to eat bread; and so it was, as oft as he passed by, that he turned in thither to eat bread; and she said unto her husband, 'Behold, now I perceive, that this is a holy man of God, which passes by us continually; let us make him a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick, and it shall be that when he comes to us, that he shall turn in thither [2 Ki 4:8-10.]' Now to this good action of this holy woman was her husband subject; and how she was blest afterwards for her faithfulness, and receiving of the man of God!

Now the prophet of the Lord did not despise this woman's speaking, in the time of the law.

Neither did Solomon despise the prophecy his mother taught him [Prov 31:1]. Prov. xxxi.

And David said, 'The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it [Psa 45:9].' Psalm lxviii. 11.

And the king's daughter was among the honourable women [2 Ki 11:2f?]. So there were the honourable women, that feared and served the Lord God, in the time of the law, and before the law.

But now there should be much more in the time of the gospel, which is preached to every creature; which gospel-light has enlightened every man that cometh into the world; and in the time of the covenant of grace, which hath appeared unto all men, to teach them, and bring their salvation. And so in the time of the gospel, light, and grace, the honourable women should be meet-helps, and fellow-labourers together in the work and service of the Lord, as man and woman was before they fell, and as they were in the time of the law.

For that honourable Deborah, which was a valiant mother in Israel, was a judge and a prophetess [Judg 4:4]. Judges v.

And Jephtha's daughter, was not she a virtuous young woman? and see what a sermon she preached to her father, and said to him, 'Let me go up to the mountains to bewail my virginity:' and he said unto her, go; and she went and her companions, fellow-virgins: and she said unto her father, as thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, so do unto me according to what hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thy enemies.

And the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephtha [Judg 11:30-40]. Judges xi.

So here they had a Yearly Meeting upon this occasion: but the assemblies of the women about the works and services the Lord commanded, was beyond this.

And Manoah, Samson's mother, unto her the angel of the Lord appeared, and declared unto her great things, which she declared unto her husband, but her husband did not reprove her [Judg 13]; and when her husband was in fear that they should die, then his wife encouraged him, saying, 'If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering, and have showed us all these things [Judg

13:22f].'

And here you may see the steadfastness of this woman's faith, beyond her husband's, as in Judges xiii.

And the woman of Tekoah, see what a sermon she preached to king David [2 Sam 14:1-20]. 2 Sam. xiv.

And you may see what a large sermon the woman of the city of Abel preached unto Joab the general; she told him, she was one of them that were peaceable and faithful in Israel; and thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother of Israel; why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord? So she convinced him and preserved the city [2 Sam 20:10-22].

And so these and such women are recorded to posterity for their wisdom, and their virtue, and zeal, and their faith, as you may see in the 2d of Samuel and the 20th.

And what think you of Esther? read her book, and see the behaviour of this virtuous honourable woman, who by her wisdom, faith, and virtue, preserved her people Israel; she was a nursing-mother to them; as you may read in the book of Esther, who kept a fast with her maidens to the Lord, and also desired Mordecai to keep a fast in Shushan [Esth 4:16]. Esther iv. 16.

Now, all you careless women, that are out of God's service, and think ye have no need to be in the service and work of the Lord, hear the word of the Lord, what Isaiah says to such: 'Arise up, ye women, that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters, give ear to my speech; many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fall, and the gathering shall not come [Isa 32:9f].' Nor you cannot expect it in your ease and carelessness, that neglect God's voice and speech, and are not diligent; your heavenly vintage will fall, and of it ye will have little gathering. 'Tremble, ye women, that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; strip ye, make ye bare, gird sackcloth upon your loins [Isa 32:11], &c. Isaiah xxxii. Therefore put off that careless garment, and shake off sloth, and put on diligence in the service of God.

Now, the Jews had their assemblies of mourning-women; and therefore the prophet calls for the mourning-women, and let them bewail [Jer 9:17f], says he, when the Jews went into transgression.

And this was because the men and women were not diligent in his service, in the power and spirit of God, which he had poured upon them.

And Jeremiah says, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O ye women! and let your ears receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one their neighbours lamentation [Jer 9:20].' Jer. ix. 20.

So, here the prophet exhorts the women, to hear the word of God first, and then to teach and exhort their daughters and neighbours, yea, wailing and lamentation.

And were they not, and are they not, to teach their families and their neighbours from the word of the Lord, both in the time of the law and the gospel, to prevent wailing and lamentation.

And see in Ezekiel, how he exhorted, and what the Lord says there; I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after their lewdness [Ezek 23:48].

And then, as they are obedient to this teaching, they will shun the judgments that came upon the Jews, which were compared to women; as in Ezek. xxiii. And the assemblies of the women did continue amongst

the Jews till they went into captivity.

And when Saul and David had made a great slaughter upon the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel (mark, out of all the cities of Israel; and surely this was a great assembly of women) singing and dancing, &c. with joy, and with instruments of music; and the women answered one another as they played, and sung praises unto God.

And Saul the king was not angry with the women, but at David, because they ascribed so much honour to him [1 Sam 18:6-9]; for they were partakers of the salvation of the Lord, and of the deliverance, as well as the men. 1 Sam. xviii. 6.

And so they are partakers in the gospel, of the deliverance over the devil, the grand enemy of mankind: and are exhorted to praise the Lord, and to make melody in their hearts to the Lord [Eph 5:19], for their salvation and deliverance by Christ, in the time of the gospel, as well as the men. 1 Sam. xviii.

And in 2 Chron. xxv. there Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing-men and singing-women spoke of Josiah in their lamentation [2 Chr 35:25].

So here were not only singing-men, but singing-women, which did not only sing but lament for this good man Josiah.

And in the days of Ezra, after the Jews returned from their captivity to their land, there were two hundred singing-men and singing-women [Ezra 2:65]. Ezra ii.

And in Neh. vii. where the priest stood up with Urim and Thummim, (that is, light and perfection,) they had two hundred and forty-five singing-men and singing-women [Neh 7:65,67].

So these were encouraged by the priests, according to David and Solomon's order; and these were besides the assemblies of the women, about works and services in the holy things; for these sung praises to God.

And in Zeph. iii. he saith, 'Sing, ye daughters of Zion, shout and rejoice with all thy heart, ye daughters of Jerusalem; the Lord hath taken away thy judgment, &c. the Lord is in the midst of thee, thou shalt see evil no more [Zeph 3:14].'

And in Zech. ii. he encourageth them, to 'sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord [Zech 2:10].'

So here is great cause for the daughter of Zion to rejoice; and who shall stop her mouth?

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