

## WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO A HEALTHY CHURCH (the attributes of godly women based on Titus)

Dear sisters.

Jim and Susan had been married for three years. By mutual consent, they decided to postpone their family for about five years so Jim could complete his education and then become a full-fledged accountant. Susan Worked as an executive secretary. She loved her work and was making good money to 'put her hubby through.' She also took a few graduate courses at night in the same university Jim attended. In fact, twice a week, they met for dinner at the campus. But then it happened: She became pregnant two years before their target date. Obviously, they had to change their plans radically. Susan dropped out of school immediately and then quit work during her sixth month of pregnancy. She's now very much occupied at home as a young mother. Jim curtailed his study schedule drastically to earn enough money to care for his family. This meant postponing his graduation for a couple of years.

This story, of course, can be repeated many times in twenty-first-century families. And it usually turns out quite well. Most people adapt, change their plans, and welcome into the world and their home a new personality.

But Jim and Susan's case is different. Immediately Susan sensed Jim's disappointment. She felt he blamed her for the pregnancy. And she had to admit her own disappointment. She resented having to drop out of school and give up her job, and deep down, she resented Jim's attitude.

This is an illustration based on our reality. True, it represents only one situation out of many, and they vary in certain particulars when compared to real-life situations. But in essence, it presents a recurring problem in today's society. And we think that this is completely different than the society Paul is addressing.

In our time, one of the most devastating, and weakening, and destructive movements is the 'Feminist Movement.' It is changing not only the world but sadly, it is changing the church, and as a result, the Word of God is being dishonoured. Opponents are having plenty bad to say about us and God our Saviour is being dishonoured and shamed. Radical feminism has brainwashed our culture. It has brainwashed our culture to the degree that even many Christians and denominations have fallen victim to this. Church leaders, theologians, professors of theology who are supposed to be profound in the Scripture, as well as laypeople in the church have bought the feminist lies. Marriage and the family, the primary building blocks of the social and moral order, are in shambles in our country and the future is even worse than the present. And a lot of Christians, not just in liberal churches but also in our churches are falling prey to this agenda. The sad thing is that most of us have no idea where it is coming from. Most of us think that this is just a lot of women who really just want some liberation and some freedom and they are tired of cleaning floors and washing dishes. All they want is equal pay, and they want equal jobs, and they want to get out from under the routine duties and express themselves in more grandiose ways than they think they can in the home.

Don't forget the real feminist agenda is frightening. The real feminist agenda is Satanic and you need to understand that. A little bit of understanding of where feminism has come from so that you get a better understanding of what the apostle Paul is writing to Titus. For we think that it is all about some more freedom for women. But what is behind this cry for more freedom? Let us go back, say, to the time of the New Testament. We won't go all the way back into ancient, ancient time. We can learn enough by going back into New Testament times. When we get back into the time of the New Testament, before the New Testament, running through the New Testament and after, we have a religion that is generally known as Gnosticism.

I'm sure you have heard of it. The term 'Gnosticism' comes from the Greek word 'gnosis' which means 'to know.' Gnosticism was the religion, the mystical religion of superior knowledge. You could experience mystical, intuitive, spiritual knowledge, which was higher than the Bible; that was the whole point of it. It was an anti-God, antichrist and anti-Biblical religion designed by Satan to lure people away from Scripture. What you see today in the feminist agenda is a repackaging, a reincarnation of ancient Gnosticism. And in summary: Gnosticism is the blasphemy of Satanic distortion of God's truth. Everything twisted and perverted: the Bible says, God is a good God, and He is the sovereign God; the Gnostics denied it and blasphemed His name. The Bible says, Christ is the Living God incarnate in flesh; the Gnostics blasted it, blasphemed His name. The Bible says the snake was the tempter; they say the snake is wisdom personified, who is the instructor. The Bible says Jesus died on a cross for your sins; the Gnostics says that the Jesus that died on the cross was a joke. Obviously, this is Satan's lying heresy to mix up God's truth. This is the blasphemous stuff the Apostle Paul wrote against, even in his epistles in the New Testament. And a very central element in this 'Gnosticism' Paul was confronted with, is the issue of 'feminism.' Eve was the saviour of Adam; and furthermore, the spiritual or heavenly Eve was the personification of wisdom in the serpent who became the instructor, and by thus, his instruction sets out to save men. Eve dominates Adam and sexual roles are totally altered. And you can understand this, because Satan wants to totally tear up God's created order. They want to wipe out all sexual distinction.

See, this is how Satan has always tried to destroy God's moral order in the world, and attacking the family, of course, does the greatest damage. Diabolical reversal of everything is Satan's approach. Destroy God's created order; destroy the integrity of Scripture: destroy the character of God; destroy the name of Christ.

This is what is behind today's feminist movement. This is not some original deal that popped up in our century by a few women who wanted to take off the apron and buy a briefcase. This is not something that was invented by women who wanted to abort their babies and get into the board rooms of corporations and behind the desks of the executives. This 'New Age' thinking - that is what it is called today - is nothing but 'Gnosticism.' 'New Age' is a new way of talking about age-old Gnosticism. The heart of it is that female power is the key to salvation. The 'Goddess Cult' is back!

Well, our society is doing exactly what is told in Romans what happens to a society when 'God gives them up.' What does it say? "God gave them up." and what did they do? "Women with women doing things which aren't even imaginable, and men with men doing things which aren't imaginable." (Rom. 2: 26-27). That is what happens to a society under God's wrath: God lets them go, and they are going the way of the Satanic lies.

There is no doubt about what a woman's role is. Look at Titus 2. What has God designed for a woman? Verse 4, "to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands. that the word of God may not be blasphemed." That is very clear. But you can get into a lot of trouble by suggesting that kind of stuff. Try standing up in this culture and saying, "Women you are commanded to love your husband, and to love your children, and to work at home, and to be subject to your husband." The people will at least laugh at you. But God has laid out His standards. They are not negotiable. And you don't need a master's degree to figure out what it means "to love your husband, love your children, and to work at home!" How hard is that? By the way, there are no qualifiers there, no caveats, no footnotes. It is just what it says, 'Go home, submit to your husband, have children, raise them in godliness, take care of your house.' And that is what older women are to teach younger women. They are to teach it not only with their mouth; they are to teach it with their life.

When I say this we are already in the midst of a study of Paul's letter to Titus. Titus, a younger man than Paul, has been given the assignment of ministry on the island of Crete. Churches have been established there but they have some great needs. They have need for spiritual leadership. They have need for spiritual maturity in the congregation. And so Titus has been given the assignment to work to that end as verse 5 of chapter I says. "To set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city."

In order to strengthen the hand of Titus, in order to encourage him in the task, the apostle Paul writes him this letter. And this letter is intended not only for Titus but also for the congregations so that they will understand why Titus is doing what he is doing. In chapter 1 Paul deals with the leadership of the church. But as we move to chapter 2, the focus changes from the pastors to the people, from the elders to the everybody, from the leadership to the laity. And chapter 2 is all about the character of a healthy church. We will find here very specific, very straightforward, very direct instruction given to every segment of the church in order that the church might be in itself healthy. And as you can imagine the Lord is concerned about the health of His body, the church. We live in a time when people are fanatically concerned about their physical bodies and we must understand that the Lord is far more concerned about His spiritual body. One important note that bears on that theme is the use of the word 'sound.' The word 'sound,' the word in Greek basically gives us our word 'hygiene', means 'healthy.' It is used nine times in the pastoral epistles, namely 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. And of those nine uses of the word 'sound,' five of them appear in Titus. Five times Paul directs Titus' attention and ours to the need for spiritual health. If anything is clear from the pastoral epistles and from Titus it is that the Lord is concerned about healthy doctrine and healthy living. And they are linked. In chapter 1 for example, and verse 9 he talks about sound doctrine and then in verse 13, living it out by being sound in the faith. In chapter 2 verse 1 he talks again about sound doctrine and living it out by being sound in faith.

In chapter 2 verse 7 he talks about purity in doctrine and its consequent sound in speech, verse 8. So the theme throughout Titus is the teaching of sound doctrine and the call for consequent sound living, healthy doctrine which produces healthy living. That is crucial!

Now this is all set against the backdrop of unsound doctrine which produces unsound living, or unhealthy doctrine which produces unhealthy Christianity. Repeatedly in Titus there is a preoccupation with false teachers. The false teachers have a diseased doctrine which results in a diseased living. It is that God is concerned that His church have healthy teaching and be called to healthy application of that teaching, healthy living. If a church is to be spiritually healthy, if it is to be sound, whole, if it is to enjoy strength, power, wellbeing, it must have sound words, sound doctrine and it must be called to sound healthy spiritual living. In Chapter 2 the apostle is concerned with healthy Christian living. We are going to look at a godly congregation and how a godly congregation functions. Therefore we hear about older men, and older women, younger women, younger men and those who work as employees here called slaves.

At the moment we are interested in the instruction given to the women, "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things - that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

Women are to be a godly resource in the church. Paul suggests several qualities that should mark these women. "The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour." That is one word in the Greek and it is used only here in the Bible. And the word means "priest-like".

They are to be like priests. What does that mean? In other words, they are holy. They are the kind of women who should have access to God. They are the kind of women who could enter God's holy presence, sacred character, godly lives. Such a woman is described for us in Luke chapter 2 in that wonderful little vignette of Anna. Anna who was advanced in years. She was a widow to the age of 84. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers—a 84-year-old godly woman who was priest-like in her behaviour, reverent in her behaviour. The outward action of holiness is dependent on an inward condition of holiness. And so Paul says to Titus, “You must tell the older women to be holy, to be like priests who enter the very presence of God.”

And then he adds secondly, “not slanderers.” You know what the word is for ‘slanderers’? It is the Greek word ‘diabolos’, 34 times in the New Testament it appears as a name for Satan. Nothing is more Satan-like than slander. And whereas men tend to sin and violently react physically, men prove to be rough or violent in their action, women have a tendency to be rough or violent in their words. Satan is a malicious slanderer, slandering night and day. Don't be Satan-like. Older women may have in the island of Crete as elsewhere found themselves with a lot of time on their hands and therefore they were given over to talk. And that talk became gossip, criticism, fault finding, slander. Paul says that is the devil's work. Older women should not vent their depravity through their speech. They should be anything but malicious gossip.

And then thirdly, he says, “not given to much wine.” This term refers to a drunkard. It is a strong term. Apparently in Crete as elsewhere, older people turn to stimulants to refresh their weary bodies, tired minds, and he says your women are not to do that. Your women don't need to become slaves to that. It must have been a common thing as it even is today. These older believers are not to become drunkards; they are not to give themselves to wine; they are to maintain their senses. They also have a positive duty at the end of verse 3: they are to be teaching what is good. They are to be teaching what is good. Older women, you need to be teaching. Teaching whom? Verse 4: teaching the young women to love their husbands, love their children, be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their husbands that the Word of God may not be dishonoured. You teach the younger women. You have already taught your children. They are gone. Now it is your time to teach the younger generation. That is so important. That is why you have to have those godly older women in the congregation to teach the younger ones, to teach them how to raise their children, how to love their husbands and how to be godly. The teaching place of the older women is not in the church (1 Tim. 2). The teaching place of an older woman is the home, informal teaching by word, by example, in a group of women here and there and wherever to bring along a generation of godly women. This is probably what is going to happen in the church in the future if our godly women today don't teach the next generation because they don't have normal families to bring them up with any kind of sense about what a family is.

She is to teach what is good. What is right and what is good is to encourage young women to love their husbands, love their children, be sensible, pure, workers at home. etc., etc. That is their primary role to raise a godly generation of young women. That is important to realise for the older women: the young women in your life are crucial. And you have them, they may be your daughters, they may be your daughters in law. They may be your granddaughters, they may be your daughter's friends, they may be your nieces, they are around, they may be those you know because of friendships, the daughters of your friends. They may be people in the church family. I don't think they are asking here for some kind of formal seminar. You have to come alongside and teach them how to live life, nurture them to godliness. So that you older people are not the cause of dishonouring God's Word, so that you older people are not the

cause of giving the opponent something to say bad about the church and so that you are not the cause of people who would doubt God's saving power, you need to live like this.

A lot is at stake... a lot is at stake. And you have so much to offer. The older women are to be teachers of what is good in order that they may encourage the young women. "Encourage these young women," that is train them "in the matter of self-control to love their husbands."

Secondly, Paul says. "Teach these young women to love their children." That's one word: 'philoteknos', to be children lovers... to be children lovers. Women, this is your highest calling: to raise godly children (1 Timothy 2:15). That is your highest calling. Your greatest contribution comes in motherhood. That is generally true. It is important to remember that there are some women that God wants to be single and they are the exception. He doesn't want them to be married. They have what the New Testament calls a gift of singleness. First Corinthians 7 says that women who are single should remain single, if they can do that. Some women are designed by God to be single for the Kingdom's sake. And there are some women who are barren for the Kingdom's sake, for God's divine purposes. There are some men who cannot produce children and therefore their wives will never bear children. God knows that and in His purpose and His providence, that is a glorious and complete and total fulfillment for that individual woman. But those are the unique exceptions that God designs. The general rule is that women bear children and love the children they bear. Women are to be taught, according to verse 5, to be sensible, to have sound judgment, common sense, right thinking, right priorities, very basic. The older women come along and they teach the young women the common sense stuff of life, just the normal processes of knowing your priorities, thinking right, making sound judgment, applying wisdom. Then he says. "Teach the young women to be pure." Morally pure. Holy women have always conducted themselves that way so Paul says you teach the young women to be pure like that. And then Paul says. 'Workers at home.'

And here is the one that gets all the heat nowadays because women don't want to work at home. Frankly, they are not at all interested in working at home if they can help it. Women don't want to be workers at home. Why? Because Satan sells the system on that. Why? Because it's anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible and it devastates the testimony of the church.

The word 'workers at home,' one word in the Greek, 'oikourgos', from two root words: 'ergon', which means work; and 'oikos' which means house. It is simply the sphere of a woman's life is her home: that is her domain. It doesn't mean she has to be there 24 hours a day and can never leave. That is the sphere of her life. That is her domain. It is not that she is simply to be home, but that the home is her sphere.

When your children are grown and gone or if God doesn't give you any children, you have a certain freedom. But even then in what you choose to do outside the home, you don't lose the responsibility for the home, you may be able to care for your home and because you have no children still do some things outside. Your home may still be a haven for your husband; it may be a place where you can show hospitality. You may have the opportunity to wash the saints' feet and do every good work and still do something outside the home, something noble. You must make wise choices if you're going to take the freedom that you have in terms of time because your children are grown, because you can care for that home because of conveniences and choose where it is you are going to use your gifts and talents and abilities and women have them to teach and lead and administer and coordinate and serve and help and give and all of that, just like all of the gifts that are mentioned in the New Testament. You must choose wisely so you don't compromise yourself in any way. But your place is the home. Rather, a woman's responsibility is in the home. To say her place is in the home makes you think she just ought to sit there because that is where she belongs. No, that's where her duty and responsibility is; that is where her opportunity is to have the greatest impact on the world. A woman doesn't

impact the world by getting a briefcase and going to the city. She impacts the world by raising a godly generation of men and women.

Then it says, and this is wonderful in verse 5, “She should be kind.” What needs to be said about that? Gentle, tenderhearted, merciful, thoughtful. And then lastly, being subject to their own husbands. Not somebody else’s husband but their own. That is an echo of Ephesians 5:22, subject to their own husbands. A woman doesn’t know how to bow her knee to God until she learns how to bow her knee to her husband. That doesn’t mean a subservient way. It simply means that she submits as God has designed the order. Christ... God is the head of Christ. Christ is the head of the man 1 Corinthians 11 says, and the man is the head of the woman; therefore she is subject to her own husband.

All of that so that the Word of God may not be dishonoured. It isn’t so much for you; it’s for God’s Word so that it will not be blasphemed. The honour of Scripture is at stake. And as I said at the beginning: an unbeliever can read this text and know whether we are obeying it. I mean, what do you think the unbeliever thinks of us as women if he knows anything about the Bible? Well, so it is that God has said, you want your church powerful in the world: this is how you are to live.

And therefore, in conclusion, with the words of the apostle Paul: “Grace be with you all.”