

BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

WOMEN AND MEN SERVING FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST

IN THE CONTEXT OF MALE LEADERSHIP

1 Peter 4: 7-11 & 5: 1-4

INTRODUCTION

This morning is the final sermon in the series we have been studying for about the past 10 weeks, “Biblical Manhood and Womanhood”. We have looked at a variety of passages that explore what it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman and what difference it makes. Originally I planned to use this morning’s sermon to tackle another one of the difficult passages related to maleness and femaleness, 1 Corinthians 11: 1-16. However, I’ve increasingly felt the need to try to talk about some of the practical implications in the life of our church and to give you an opportunity to ask questions. So what I want to do this morning is give a brief summary of the basic principles we have looked at. Then I want to look at 1 Peter 4: 7-11 to give us a vision of what our church ought to look like. Finally I want to answer questions you may have. I have been given three questions already. There are 3x5 cards in all the programs you can write questions on now or as I proceed. Just pass them up to the front.

I have sought to examine what it means that we as humans are made in God’s image, male and female. The fact that human beings are either male or female is due in part to the fact that God exists as a Trinity. The one God has eternally existed as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person in the Godhead is fully God but yet there is only one God. The three persons of the Godhead have lived in perfect love and fellowship in the enjoyment of one another forever. Yet, the Son has always submitted to the Father, the Father has always had authority over the Son and the Holy Spirit has always submitted to the will of the Father and the Son. In other words, while each is fully God, they differ from one another in authority, role and function. In the same way, there is only one human race but it exists as male and female. Each of us is made in the image of God. Each one is fully human and equal in value, importance and access to God. However, men and women are different from each other in significant ways that reflect the differences that exist in role and function.

Ray Ortlund, based on Genesis 1-3 defines the relationship between men and women in this way, “In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.” John Piper, in his article, “What’s the Difference?” defines maleness and femaleness in this way. “At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships. At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman’s differing relationships.”

Two weeks ago we looked at one of the most controversial passages in the Bible, 1 Timothy 2: 11-15. “Women should learn in silence and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, she must be silent. For Adam was formed first and then Eve. And the man was not deceived but the woman, after being deceived, became a sinner.” We saw in that passage that there are some roles and functions in the church reserved for men. The reason that Paul says this is because of what happened at creation and at the fall. Paul does not limit this command to the church at Ephesus or to his own culture. This means that the office of pastor/elder/overseer in the church is reserved for men. The function of teaching the church when it is gathered together as men and women, in whole or in part,

is reserved for men. This is not because men are better or more important than women. It is because of what God made masculinity and femininity to be.

Let me emphasize that the only limitation that the Scriptures place on the ministry of women in the church is this limitation. The silence that Paul is enjoining on women is not absolute. The only words women cannot speak are words of doctrinal instruction and authoritative spiritual direction in the church when it is gathered together in whole or in part as men and women. This means that women can and must engage in a wide range of ministry in the church if the church is going to reveal the glory of Christ. This is why I want us to now take a few minutes and look at 1 Peter 4: 7-11 (read it). We are not going to do a detailed examination of this passage. Rather we are going to answer three questions. What does Peter mean by “the end of all things is near?” How should we live in light of the fact that all things are near? What will happen if we live this way?

What does the phrase, “The end of all things is near”, mean?

The “all things” refers to the entire created universe. Now that Jesus has come and died and rose again and is now sitting at God’s right hand, everything is ready for God to end the world and create a new heavens and a new earth. The end of this whole created universe could come at any time. Notice that immediately following this statement of fact there is a “therefore”. As always we need to ask, what is it there for? The answer is quite simply that Peter gives us 4 commands about how we are to live and then a summary statement regarding our motivation for living. What he says is this: God is about to end the universe as we know it therefore, here is how you should live.

If you knew for certain that the world was going to end this afternoon, what would you do? If you knew without a doubt that this afternoon you would see Jesus Christ return and destroy this whole world and rescue out of the destruction all those who believed in him, what would you do? Peter is going to tell us what God thinks your answer ought to be. All of us ought to be able to say that we would not do anything different from what we are doing right now. You should not have to change anything about how you are living because he could come today.

If you are paying attention you will immediately have a problem. Peter said “the end of all things is near” close to 2000 years ago and yet Jesus has still not come. Was he wrong? No, he was not wrong. The OT prophesied repeatedly that when Messiah showed up then would begin the process of God restoring his creation to its original condition. The question the OT leaves unanswered is how long will it take once Messiah shows up for him to complete the restoration of the world? When Jesus leaves, he leaves that question unanswered as well, but because he, the Messiah, has come, we know that the stage is set and the final act could begin at any moment. “The end of all things is near.”

Dr. D.A. Carson uses this analogy. It’s like we are walking along a cliff, parallel to it. We can walk along that cliff for a long time but at every moment we are very near to falling off. In the same way, we are very near to the appearing of Christ, he could come at any time. Only God knows when that time will be. As far as we are concerned it could be today. The cliff, which is Christ’s return, is only a few feet away. So the Christian must live with a conscious awareness that today this entire world, as we know it, could cease to exist and a whole new world and way of living could be instituted. Peter tells us in this passage how we should live in light of the fact that the world as we know it could end today.

How should we live in light of the fact that the end of all things is near?

There are four commands that Peter gives here. I am not going to deal with each command in detail. Rather, I'm going to make a few comments about the first three and then concentrate on the final command that is in vv. 10-11. I want to make sure that you feel the force of Peter's argument.

"To be clear-minded" literally means, "don't think like a person who is out of touch with reality", "think correctly about reality". The mother of a friend of mine has been paranoid schizophrenic for as long as he can remember. When she doesn't take her medication she is convinced that her husband, my friend's father, is a Russian spy who is holding her captive. She is not in touch with reality. If it's true God can show up at any time, don't live like a mentally ill person and ignore that fact. Then he tells us, not only to think sensibly about reality but also we must not act like a drunk person who has no control over himself. We must carefully control how we use our time and invest our resources. We are to think correctly and control ourselves so that we can do the four things he commands.

It makes no sense to say you are a Christian and thereby confess that you expect Jesus to show up at any minute and then to give little or no attention to these four commands. What Peter says is that to be a prayerless person is to be a person who is out of touch with reality, whose life is out of control. You are like a person suffering from mental illness if you hold grudges against others. You're like a drunk person, stumbling down the street if you don't use all that God has given you to serve others. If you aren't praying, loving others and using your resources to meet the needs of others then you're like the law student who has to take the bar exam but who never studies for it. Then, on the night before the 10-hour test he stays up all night at a party. That is not a sensible way to live. It is a life that is out of control. You're like the person living in South Carolina who knows a hurricane is going to hit the next day but who does nothing to prepare and acts as if nothing is going to happen. He spends his day planting flowers & mowing the lawn rather than boarding the windows and packing the car. In both of these cases the person needs to think correctly about the situation and then discipline themselves to prepare for it.

I got to go deer hunting for the first time when I was 10 years old. The month before that first hunt I couldn't stop talking about going with my dad and what it would be like. I dreamed about hunting. Every night the week before, I helped pack and tried on clothes and went to the store to buy food. But every day I had to go to school and though it seemed to go so slow I worked extra hard to make sure all my homework was done so I didn't have to worry about it. Then the big day came and we packed the car and my dad, grandpa and I climbed in and headed for the north woods. I knew that day was coming and even though I had to keep living my normal life, i.e. going to school, eating, sleeping, doing homework, there were other things I did to prepare for the big day. Even when I did my normal activities, the thought of hunting and the excitement of going was right there and even motivated me to work harder. Jesus is coming back again and while we need to keep living our "normal" lives, the fact that he is coming back ought to affect everything about how we live.

God says that the only people who are in touch with reality are those whose lives are characterized by prayer, loving others so much that you don't even notice when they do you wrong and using your gifts and resources to meet the needs of others. In light of the fact that Christ can return at any moment what do you need more of, TV or God? Money or God? Clothes or God? A clean house or God? A perfectly manicured lawn or God? A promotion or God?

I want to spend a few minutes thinking about what vv. 10-11 says. The command in this verse is that we all are to serve one another. The NT knows nothing of spectator Christianity. Every person who calls himself or herself a Christian is to be engaged in serving others. But notice that the way we are to serve is through using the gift that each of us has been given. Everything you have and are was given by God and so anything you have that God uses to strengthen the faith of another person is a spiritual gift. That is the NT definition of a spiritual gift: An ability a Christian has that God uses to strengthen the faith of another.

There are three things that make an ability a spiritual gift: First, the person who possesses the ability is a Christian. Second, the Christian uses that ability for the express purpose of building up the faith of another person. Third, God causes the use of that ability to actually meet the need of the person served.

The end of v. 10 literally says, “like a faithful steward of the diverse grace of God.” What this means is this. Every ability you possess as a Christian is loaned to you by God. God has given you these abilities for the purpose of helping others to experience the love of God and grow in their love for God. You are a steward of that gift. In other words, one day you will stand before God, who owns you and the gift he gave you and you will have to give an account of your stewardship. Did you use the gifts he gave you to serve others or not? This is why it is insane for you to not be pouring yourself out in love for others by using the gifts God has given you to build the faith of others. So as I look at other people I am asking, how can I help this person know the love of God in deeper ways and trust God in greater ways? My basic attitude, as a Christian, towards other people, especially other Christians, is how can I use my gifts, my time, my resources to help this person? If this is not the orientation of your life, then you are acting like an insane or drunk person. You are living completely out of touch with reality.

Every Christian, both male and female, has been given gifts that he or she is to be using in the service of others. Any woman who feels as if she has no part in the significant work of the church because she cannot be an elder or because she cannot teach or exercise spiritual authority over men in the gathered congregation is not thinking straight. The teaching and spiritual authority of the male elders and teachers of the church are necessary for the health of the church but are not more significant than the work of any other member of the body of Christ. Each of us has a critical role to play that is different from the role of any other member and we must faithfully fulfill our role. I spend many hours every week talking with individuals about their relationship with Christ. I can tell you that the forces that are arrayed against us for the purpose of destroying our faith in Christ are many and they are fierce. I am delighted to pour myself out for you in prayer and study and teaching and counseling. But I’m only one person and my gifts are very limited. What people need in order to persist in faith is far beyond my ability to provide. We are in a war and we desperately need each other. There are women who need other women to pray with them and mentor them. There are married people who need other married people to strengthen their commitment to one another. There are single moms and young moms who need help I cannot give. There are depressed people and angry people and greedy people and poor people and sick people and fearful people and overwhelmed people who are on the edge of abandoning Christ that need your help. There is a certain amount of organization that we can do but most of this has got to take place through our relationships with one another. It takes personal initiative. We need to be in a community that knows one another well enough to know about the needs that exist. You need to be in a small group not just for what you will get out of it but because there are others who need your gifts if they are going to make it.

Next Peter tells us how we are to exercise our gifts in the service of others. If your gift is a speaking gift (like teaching, evangelism, prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, singing, comforting people in their grief, confronting people in their sin, discernment, a parent sharing wisdom with a child, leading a small group, etc.) then you need to make sure that you are saying what God wants said. There are two things that “as one speaking the very words of God” means. First, whenever you speak as a Christian for the purpose of building others, you need to treat what you say with utmost seriousness. Every time you teach or encourage, what you say will be used by God either to save the other person or to damn the other person. So take it very serious. Second, it means that you had better make sure that what you are saying lines up with God’s word. My words only have authority and can only build faith as they accurately communicate “the Word.” When you take upon yourself the mantle of speaking on behalf of God, which is what you do whenever you speak as an act of service aimed at encouraging another’s faith, you are going to be held accountable by God for the accuracy of your speech.

If your gift is an action oriented gift (Like making meals for the sick, running the sound board, giving money to the poor, healing, performing miracles, inviting people over for supper, fixing cars, remodeling homes, serving food to the hungry, setting up chairs, designing a web page, etc.) you need to make sure that you are performing the service in the strength that God gives, not in your own, human energy. How do you serve “as if serving out of the strength which God supplies”? We are to perform the act of service as if God is right there supervising and giving us everything we need to serve with excellence. We need to perform our work prayerfully, depending upon God for the wisdom, skill and strength to do the work.

What will happen if we live this way?

The second half of v. 11 tells us to do all these things for this one purpose: so that God will be glorified. In other words, our motivation for praying, loving intensely, being hospitable and serving one another is so that God will be seen to be a great and gracious God and others will join with us in loving him. This brings us back to where Peter started. God is about to show up and if you are a Christian this makes you totally excited because you love God supremely. You delight in him so much and you cannot wait to be with him and you yearn to have more and more people know and love and appreciate him. This is what motivates you to pray, love and serve. This is Christian living. Christianity isn't about duty and morality. It is about having a heart that is madly in love with God and so loves to love others so they will be madly in love with God.

Permit me to use my love of deer hunting to show how this works. I love our annual trip to northern WI with my dad and brothers to pursue the wily whitetail. I want my sons to enjoy it as well. So since they were little I have told them stories of the glory of hunting. When I'm with my brothers and have my sons around we love to talk about past hunts and plan for future ones. I made sure that my sons went through hunter safety classes and learned how to respect and handle guns. I've read stories of deer hunting to them. When they turn 10 I take them with me to go along while I hunt. Then, when they turn 12, they get to carry a gun for the first time. I love hunting and I love it when my sons love hunting and so I love to do things that help them enjoy hunting.

This is exactly what Peter is saying here. If you are a Christian, then you rejoice in God. You know that he is about to show up in all his glory and power. You want as many people as possible to know the happiness that God gives because you love it when others are delighted with God. So, you pray, you love, you forgive, you don't gossip, you provide practically for others and you use your gifts to serve others so that as many as possible will join you in glorifying Jesus when he comes.

QUESTIONS

Before I deal with these questions let me make sure you are aware of several resources we have in relation to these issues. There are 25 copies of an article by Dr. Grudem on the information table entitled, “What should women do in the church?” Also, there are three booklets, “50 questions”, “What's the Difference?” and “For Single Men and Women”.

1. If we are created in the image of God and God is a Trinity, why are we a duality and not a trinity... or is there an analogous being in mankind that corresponds to the Holy Spirit?

Answer: Children are expressive of the third member of the trinity. As the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, so children proceed from their father and mother.

2. Is there going to be manhood/womanhood when we are with the Lord and when we get our new bodies? Will we retain our unique male/female distinctiveness?

Answer: We aren't explicitly given an answer to this question. We do know that there will be no marriage in heaven and therefore no sexual relations or procreation (Matt. 22: 23-33). 1 John 3: 2 says, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he had the same body, though glorified that he had while on earth. In other words, he was male. If we are going to be like him then it would seem that we are going to be male and female as well.

3. What do you think about the saying, "Men use love to get sex and women use sex to get love?"

Answer: I would say that this is a generally accurate way of describing how husbands and wives sin and how sexually immoral single people add to the sin of their immorality. Whenever you speak in generalities there are always going to be exceptions. There are many ways that spouses and men and women in general sin against one another. Some people use anger to get what they want. Some people use crying to get what they want. Some people use service to get what they want. The problem is with both what people want and with the methods they use to get what they want. What Christians want is God to be glorified in them and by them. They want to so delight in the love of God for them that they delight to pour out love on others. The goal of Christian husbands is to display the greatness of Christ's love by loving their wives as Christ has loved the church when he died for her. The goal of Christian women is to display the greatness of Christ's love by submitting to the leadership of their husband as the church submits to Christ. So whenever a husband has the goal of having sex with his wife and seeks to manipulate her to give him what he wants by using affection or whatever he is sinning against God. Whenever a wife engages in sexual relations with her husband in order to get him to "love" her the way she wants she is sinning. What Christian spouses love to do is love the other person as God directs because love is the overflow of joy in God that delights to meet the needs of others. So, the Christian wife, when she discovers that her husband desires to have sexual relations delights to have sexual relations because she is so happy to be loved by Jesus. The Christian husband, when he learns that his wife needs his affection or attention in conversation loves to sit with her and talk without expecting anything else because he is so delighted that he belongs to God.