

## LESSON 11

### . . . FEMINISM

#### **FEMINISM AND THE BIBLE**

Feminism has been one of the most successful social movements in our nation. Although there have been some legitimate goals, one of the results of this movement was to influence our culture to ignore the fact that there is a difference in the roles of men and women. The Bible clearly teaches a distinction in the roles of men and women, even as it teaches an equality of men and women. The issue is one of roles and not equality.

**According to the Bible both men and women:**

- **Are made in the image of God**
- **Have dominion over the earth**
- **Are joint heirs in Christ**
- **And they have different roles in life.**

The early leaders in the feminist movement recognized this and took issue with men and women having different roles. After their views became more accepted, there have been others who have tried to interpret the Bible to fit their views.

This is similar to what happened with the issue of evolution. Before Charles Darwin and Charles Lyell, no one ever thought that the Bible taught any evolutionary origins of life. After Evolution became accepted by many in society, religious people tried to bend and twist the Bible to fit evolution rather than allow the Bible to mean what it says. Result - the acceptance of the day-age theory, which is an effort to force Genesis to match the beliefs of the world.

The same has happened with the roles of men and women. Much of what is being promoted today does not come from a careful reading of the Bible, but is an effort to make the Bible to fit the views of the culture in which we live. The "First Wave" of Feminism, The feminist movement of the nineteenth century, effectively began July 19-20, 1848, at a women's convention that was held in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York. About 300 attended. Elizabeth Stanton wrote the "Declaration on Women's Rights," and it was signed by 68 women and 32 men.

The Declaration began as a parody of the Declaration of Independence and said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal." Much of the "Declaration" was a listing of the different ways the current laws were different for men and women.

Two weeks later, a second convention was held in Rochester, New York, during which the movement began to be more formally organized.

The third meeting was in 1850 at Worcester, Massachusetts. It was the first to claim to be a national women's rights convention, having delegates from nine states. Except for 1857 conventions were held each year up to 1860.

In 1852, Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony joined forces. They remained a team for nearly fifty years, with Anthony managing the business affairs and Stanton doing most of the writing.

## **FEMINISM AND THE BIBLE**

The early feminists viewed the Bible to be degrading to women because of what it teaches concerning the sin of Eve and the role assigned to women in both the Old and New Testaments. In their response to the Bible, three different views developed.

**The Moderate View:** The moderate view did not consider the problem to be the Bible itself, but rather the acceptance of perverted and sexist interpretations of the Bible. Once the Bible is properly interpreted, it can be seen as not being hostile to women. Many who took this view were adherents of metaphysical or "New Thought" religions (such as Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science.), which believed that the Bible must be interpreted symbolically or mystically. These agreed that the Bible is harmful to women if taken literally, but when understood according to its inner or mystical meaning it affirms the equality of women with men.

**The Liberal View:** The liberal view accepted the theory of evolution to be the answer of culture and religion. It viewed the Bible as a purely human book which records the history of one of the world's many religious traditions, and which has no special divine authority and no more relevance for today than scores of other such books. As such the Bible should just be ignored.

**The Radical View:** The radical view agreed with the liberal understanding of the nature of the Bible as a purely human book with no divine authority, but it did not agree that it could simply be ignored. As long as the Bible is being distributed in mass quantities, and large numbers of people still believe that it is God's inspired Word, they will believe that it provides a divinely given mandate to keep women in subjection. Thus some positive action with regard to the Bible must be taken. Whether it is just a matter of wrong interpretation or a false view of its nature, either way the influence of the Bible must be neutralized. This was Elizabeth Stanton's view. She believed that the Bible must be destroyed if women were to be free. In order to neutralize the influence of the Bible, Elizabeth Stanton and other women wrote "The Woman's Bible" to show the world what the Bible is really like.

While Stanton allowed the moderate members of the project to express their ideas and to present the "correct" interpretations of various Bible passages as they saw them, she repudiated the moderate approach. She wrote,

"In plain English, the Bible itself is simply degrading to women. No mystical symbolism can enable one to twist out of the Old or New Testaments a message of justice, liberty or equality from God to the women of the nineteenth century." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, I:61, II:66

The Woman 's Bible is actually a commentary rather than a translation. It is not a commentary on the whole Bible, but only on texts referring to women.

### **Excerpts From "The Woman's Bible"**

"The Bible, with its fables, allegories and endless contradictions, has been the great block in the way of civilization." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, II:9

"From the inauguration of the movement for woman's emancipation the Bible has been used to hold her in the 'divinely ordained sphere,' prescribed in the Old and New Testaments. The wonder is that women . . . make a fetich [sic-set upon, pursue/attack] of the very book which is responsible for their civil and social degradation." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, pg. 7, II:12

"The Bible has been of service in some respects; but the time has come for us to point out the evil of many of its teachings." Clara Neyman, *The Woman's Bible*, II:17

"The Bible always has been, and is at present, one of the greatest obstacles in the way of the emancipation and the advancement of the sex...This book has been of more injury to [woman] than has any other which has ever been written in the history of the world." E.M., *The Woman's Bible*, II:201, 203

"No institution in modern civilization is so tyrannical and so unjust to woman as is the Christian Church." Josephine Henry, *The Woman's Bible*, II:205

"All the religions on the face of the earth [including Christianity] degrade women; and so long as woman accepts the position that they assign her, her emancipation is impossible." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, I:12

Writing about the account of the widow's mite in Mark 12:41-44, Stanton criticizes the church for promoting self-sacrifice instead of self-development on the part of women.

"But when women learn the higher duty of self-development, they will not so readily expend all their forces in serving others..... 'Self-development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice,' should be woman's motto hence forward." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, II:131

"I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God, I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic code, or told the historians what they say he did about woman." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, I:12

"Does any one at this stage of civilization think the Bible was written by the finger of God, that the Old and New Testament emanated from the highest divine thought in the universe? Do they think that all the men who wrote the different

books were specially inspired?... It is full of contradictions, absurdities and impossibilities, and bears the strongest evidence in every line of its human origin... We have made a fetich [sic] of the Bible long enough. The time has come to read it as we do all other books, accepting the good and rejecting the evil it teaches." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, I:61, II:213, 8

The final statement in the *Woman's Bible*:

"The real difficulty in woman's case is that the whole foundation of the Christian religion rests on her temptation and man's fall, hence the necessity of a Redeemer and a plan of salvation. As the chief cause of this dire calamity, woman's degradation and subordination were made a necessity. If, however, we accept the Darwinian theory, that the race has been a gradual growth from the lower to a higher form of life, and that the story of the fall is a myth, we can exonerate the snake, emancipate the woman, and reconstruct a more rational religion for the nineteenth century, and thus escape all the perplexities of the Jewish mythology as of no more importance than those of the Greek, Persian and Egyptian." Elizabeth Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, II:214

(However the Bible does not hold Eve responsible . In Adam all die 1 Cor. 15:22. As the head, the man is held responsible)

Not all of the early feminists accepted the views taught in the *Woman's Bible*. There was open debate over it at the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1896. During this debate, Susan B. Anthony was one of Stanton's strongest supporters.

The first wave of feminism ended in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which recognized the right of women to vote. This right had already been won on the state level in nearly 20 states, beginning with Wyoming in 1890. An amendment on the federal level, called the "Anthony Amendment," had been submitted since 1878 but was defeated by both the House and the Senate up through World War I. The active role of women in the war effort turned the tide in their favor, and the renewed influence of the National American Woman Suffrage Alliance (with over two million members in 1917) made a difference. The amendment was passed by the House in January 1918 and by the Senate in June 1919. In August 1920 Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify it, making it a part of the Constitution.

Once the vote was won, the original feminist movement fragmented and lost momentum. The "Second Wave" of Feminism began in 1960's and continues strong into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Two of the most influential leaders of this new movement are Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem.

Betty Friedan has been called the "Mother Superior to Women's Lib."

She is credited with launching the women's liberation movement with the publication of her book, "The Feminine Mystique", in 1963.

She also founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), on June 29, 1966. She was one of its chief organizers and its first president.

She also initiated the Women's March for Equality in August 1970 and the National Women's Political Caucus in March 1971.

She was also a signer of the Humanist Manifesto II in 1973.

### **Excerpts From The Humanist Manifesto II**

**Religion** - "We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species... But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices."

**Ethics** - "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction."

**The Individual** - "In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized."

**World Community** - "We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community in which all sectors of the human family can participate.

Thus we look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government."

Gloria Steinem is also recognized as one of the leaders of the feminist movement in America.

She was on the cover of the August 16, 1971, issue of Newsweek as, "the personification of women's liberation."

In January 1972, McCall's named her, "Woman of the Year."

She started Ms. magazine in 1971 and remained its editor until 1987. Through it, the message of feminism was made available on a monthly basis at newsstands everywhere.

"By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God." Gloria Steinem, in Saturday Review of Education, cited in the pamphlet, "Do These Women Speak For You?"

The women's liberation movement, is almost altogether the product of women who reject the divine origin and absolute authority of the Bible, and usually the very existence of the God who reveals Himself in the Bible.

Not all feminists follow the extreme ideas as many of the leaders have tried to blend the goals of feminism (elimination of the roles of the sexes) with the Bible.

However, this will not work. Just as the general theory of evolution and the Bible cannot be blended together. It is true that there is special evolution, that is, there is change within kinds. The Bible even gives example of this type of evolution taking place. But the general theory of evolution, that is, the gradual development of all life form rising out of simple organisms completely contradicts what Genesis teaches and these two views cannot be harmonized.

In the same way, there is some truth recognized by feminists. The Bible teaches that God made men and women equal. As long as we recognize that both are in the image of God, both have dominion over the earth, and both share in the inheritance in Christ, there is no conflict.

**But, when feminists want to eliminate all roles the Bible gives for men and women, there can be no harmonizing of feminism and the Bible.**

Many who claim to believe in the Bible have tried to make the Bible fit the teachings of the feminists. Women preachers are becoming more common. Women are taking leadership positions more than ever. This cannot be harmonized with the teaching of the Bible, just as the general theory of evolution cannot be harmonized with the Bible.

**1 Timothy 2:11-14** Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

**1 Corinthians 14:34-35** Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

There are many arguments made in an attempt to justify women preachers. The most common is **Galatians 3:28**. Paul is not teaching the elimination of roles of men and women in the context. He is teaching that both receive the inheritance in Christ.

**Galatians 3:28-29**, There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if

you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Under the Old Covenant, only Jews received an inheritance in Israel. Slaves did not receive any inheritance, only free men. Also, only sons received the inheritance, with only rare exceptions.

The point of Galatians 3:28 is that all now receive the inheritance if they are in Christ. A slave was still a slave after conversion and a free man was still a free man after conversion. In the same way, a man is still a man and a woman is still a woman. That cannot change.

In **1 Peter 3**, Peter teaches a difference in the roles of men and women, but in the context teaches the same thing as Paul.

**1 Peter 3:1-7**, Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands... as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Feminists make another argument from Galatians 3:13

**Galatians 3:13**, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").

They argue that Christ redeemed us from the curse, and since woman was cursed with subjection in Genesis 3:16, she is no longer under the curse.

However, the curse we have been redeemed from is in Galatians 3:10.

**Galatians 3:10**, For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

The curse of the Law is that if you do not obey it completely, there is condemnation. Salvation by the Law requires perfection, and since none are perfect, all are cursed by the Law. This is what Christ redeemed us from, not from the consequences of sin given in Genesis 3.

Did God Remove Only One Of The Curses, And That Was Just For The Woman?

**Genesis 3:16-19**, (To the woman He said): "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Then to Adam He said), "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of

your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

Feminists Argument of "Mutual Submission" From **Ephesians 5:21**. Feminists claim that Ephesians 5:21 teaches a mutual submitting of the husband and wife to each other, and that they are to submit equally to each other in the same way.

**Ephesians 5:21** submitting to one another in the fear of God.

There are six passages in the N.T. that teaches either wives are to submit to their husbands, or that there is a general submission of women to men.

**1 Corinthians 14:34**, Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

**Ephesians 5:22-24**, Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

**Colossians 3:18**, Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

**1 Timothy 2:11-12**, Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

**Titus 2:3-5**, The older women... 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.

**1 Peter 3:1, 5** Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives... For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.

The husband is never told to submit to his wife, nor is there any passage that indicates that this is the relationship of men to women in general.

When **Ephesians 5:21** says,

"submitting to one another in the fear of God",

feminists assume that this teaching is an absolute equality of submission to one another for everyone.

So, when **Ephesians 5:22** says,

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord",

they assume that it also means that husbands are to submit themselves in the same way to their wives.

Paul mentions three other pairs in the same context. To be consistent, this idea of mutual submission must be applied to all pairs if it is to be applied to one pair.

### **Fathers and Children**

**Ephesians 6:1-4** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Who can believe that the Bible teaches that fathers are to submit to their children in the same way that their children submit to them?

### **Slaves and Masters**

**Ephesians 6:5-9**, Bond servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bond servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Are masters/employers to submit to their slaves/employees in the same way their slaves/employees are to submit to them?

### **Jesus and the Church**

**Ephesians 5:22-33**, This one is the most important because it is the model for the relationship between the husband and wife. The wife is told to submit to her husband

"Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything". (5:24).

For the feminists theory of mutual submission to be true, then Jesus must be in submission to the church.

**Ephesians 5:21** is not teaching a mutual submission in which both parties submit to one another in the same way as the feminists claim, but it does teach that we are to submit ourselves to one another where our circumstances calls for it. We are to submit to one another whenever our role or position in life requires such submission, as it does for wives, children, and slaves.

If you are a wife, submit to your husband.

If you are a child, submit to your parents.

If you are a slave, submit to your master.

A wife may submit to her husband, but he is to submit to the elders of the church (Heb. 13:17).

Elders, husbands, wives, masters, and slaves are all to submit to the government (Rom. 13:1).

**No matter what our position is in this life, all must submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He makes the rules, and we must come to Him on His terms.**

**AMEN!!!!**