

Priests and Faulty Logic

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What is faulty in this logic?

1. All believers are priests.
2. This means that women are priests as well as men.
3. Therefore, women can perform the same priestly functions in the church that men do.

The first statement is true. In this dispensation, every true Christian is a priest of God. Each believer is a holy priest and a royal priest (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Holy priests offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Royal priests proclaim the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The second statement is true. Women are priests as well as men. They offer the same spiritual sacrifices: their bodies, their possessions, their praises, and their service (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Eph. 5:2). And they tell forth the excellencies of their Savior.

The problem is with the third statement. It overlooks the fact that controls are placed on the public exercise of priestly functions in meetings of the church. Some controls apply to men, some to women.

Here are some controls that apply to men:

1. The hands they lift up in prayer should be holy hands, without wrath or doubting (1 Tim. 2:8).
2. When they speak, they should do so as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). This means, among other things, that the message should be the very one which God would want for that particular occasion.
3. Public prayers are to be offered in such a way that everyone in the assembly can add their personal "Amen" (1 Cor. 14:16).

Likewise there are controls which apply to women priests in assembly meetings:

1. They are to keep silent. They are not permitted to speak, but they are to be submissive (1 Cor. 14:34). They symbolize their submission by wearing a head covering (1 Cor. 11:10).
2. They are not to pray publicly. 1 Timothy 2:8 specifies that it is the men (literally, the males) who are to pray.
3. Women are not to teach (1 Tim. 2:12).

It should not come as a surprise that the Holy Spirit places controls on the activities of priests in the assembly. He does the same thing with regard to the exercise of gifts. Here, for instance, are controls on the use of tongues, as given in 1 Corinthians 14.

1. There must be an interpreter (v. 27c).
2. Not more than three may speak in tongues in any one meeting (v. 27a).
3. They must speak one at a time (v. 27b).
4. What they say must be edifying (v. 26b).
5. Women must not participate (v. 34).
6. Everything must be done decently and in order (v. 40).

Sometimes Galatians 3:28 is used in an attempt to prove that women can pray, preach, teach—even be elders in the assembly. "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."

The key to the verse, of course, is found in the phrase "in Christ Jesus." Paul is referring to our position in Christ, not to our roles in the assembly. A believing Gentile has the same standing before God as a believing Jew. A Christian slave is complete in Christ, just as his born-again master is. Saved women are accepted in the Beloved and on an equal standing with their brothers in Christ. But racial, social, and sex differences still exist, and so do differing functions assigned to members of the body.

Because of the feminist movement, the church is under enormous pressure to twist the Scriptures in order to conform to the current world view. It would be better to bend the culture to coincide with God's Word. Obedience is the key to God's blessing, to church unity, and to individual happiness. God is still looking for men and women who tremble at His Word.