

Calling All Women

Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:16-21, 21:8-9

The church has come a long way from its beginning and has fought and won many battles to liberate its people through the message of freedom and deliverance. No one has benefitted more from the gains of the church than women have. One of the basic fights of the early church was that women be elevated in status by their male counter-parts to a place where they be viewed as credible. The early church broached the idea of a woman's significance by allowing women to attend worship services with men, which was a risky proposition.

Jews maintained their own practices regarding women's roles, as directed by their understanding of Scripture and of family structure from ancient times. In general, a Jewish female was attached to a man who served as her provider, protector, and authority. Normally, a father held this role for a daughter and a husband for a wife.

As the Roman Empire expanded, Romans brought their traditions to their conquered peoples. Roman society was dominated by men at all levels: business, politics, government, and military. But some women gained influence by their association with powerful men.

In today's lesson we recognize the power of God to transform every area of life for humanity including the role of women in the spread of the Gospel to both men and women.

I. In the Temple (Luke 2:36-38)

A. Faithful Widow (vv.36-37)

1. A prophet is someone chosen by God to speak for him as he brings something to mind. (v.36a)
2. Anna is a name derivative of Hanna (mother of the prophet Samuel)
3. Penuel—father of Anna, name means “presence of God”
4. Tribe of Asher is a reference to the lost tribe of Asher that was captured as one of the 10 Northern tribes of Israel.
5. Because she is old, Anna had lived long enough to remember Israel before its occupation by the Romans. (vv.36b-37a)
6. Rather than find a new spouse she devoted herself to spiritual service in the Temple (v.37b)

B. Expressive Witness (v.38)

1. Anna had a Messianic expectation—she knew what she was waiting for
2. She had a faithful understanding—she witness to Mary and Joseph what she knew. (v.38)

II. In Jerusalem (Acts 2:16-21)

A. Unbiased Spirit (vv.16-18)

1. The word *this* refers to the speaking and hearing in the native languages of those gathered (Acts 2:11)
 2. A widespread distribution of God's Spirit would be a sign that the new era had dawned (v.17)
 3. The inclusion of Gentiles was anticipated by the phrase *all people* (v.17b)
 4. The text specifically includes Joel's prophecy of both genders engaging in prophesying. (v.18)
- B. Wonders and Signs (vv.19-21)
1. There were supernatural sounds and visual phenomena that accompanied the Holy Spirit (v.19-20)
 2. The primary issue is the announcement of salvation to all who call on the name of the Lord (v.21)
- III. In Caesarea (Acts 21:8-9)
- A. Evangelist Father (v.8)
1. Philip the evangelist not to be confused with Philip the disciple but one of the seven men full of the Holy Spirit who served the Church at Jerusalem. (v.8)
- B. Prophetesses (v.9)
1. The description of his daughter's as unmarried indicates their status as virgins (v.9)

Conclusion

An aged widow. A group of women who had followed Jesus and remained in Jerusalem after his ascension. A band of four unmarried sisters. The New Testament offers these as examples of first-century women who were endowed with the gift of prophecy. The church is at its best when everyone, both men and women are working in the church fulfilling their roles and reflecting the will of Christ.