

Imago Dei: Women, Ministry, and Combat – 1 Tim 2:8-15, Deut 22:5

Imago Dei and the Battle for Humanity - #5

Introduction – “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27). We have begun to see what a watershed verse this is. Understood, believed and applied, it provides us with a blueprint for laws and a society blessed and lifted up for all. Decried and abandoned, it leads to exploitation, bloodshed, guilt and shame. Currently, our politicians are engaging in a conversation about requiring conscription of women if (when) such a practice were to be put in place again in our country. This is another novel application of the rejection of the Imago Dei. But this follows years of abdication by the church as she refused to uphold and protect other Scripture-commanded applications of this verse.

The Ordination of Women (1 Tim 2:8-15) – Many think that the exclusion of women from formal office-holding in the church is simply bigotry and misogyny (and certainly it has been twisted and used as an instrument of just that by foolish men). However, the Scriptures give us very clear teaching on the matter which is founded on the creation order story.

Paul to Timothy – An apostle-pastor is writing to a pastor as he ministers to the church in Ephesus (1:3). As Paul’s protégé, he speaks to Timothy as a father to a son (1:2), exhorting him to let no one despise Timothy’s youth (4:12) and to take heed to the doctrine (1:3, 4:16). Paul knows that ministering in Ephesus with faithful teaching will not be easy. He spends most of the letter instructing Timothy in the organization and duties of the church. In Chapter 3 he will specifically list the qualifications for officers in the church, including that they be men. Just prior to that, he also clearly teaches that they may not be women – and gives his reasons why.

Gathering for Worship (vv8-10) – In every place where God is worshipped, men are to lift up undefiled hands in prayer. Two particular defilements are mentioned. They may not pray if they are men of wrath, or men who doubt; what comes out of their mouths must be consistent with their talk and walk all week. Women are to adorn themselves (make themselves beautiful), thoughtfully prepared to come to worship, with modest apparel and propriety (a robust sense of shame and not sexually provocative), and not in ostentatious, show-offy dress. Knowing the cosmopolitan culture of Ephesus, this was anything but a culturally conditioned command. What they should be noticed for is their fruitful good works done in faith.

Authoritative Teaching and Ruling (vv11-14) – Women are to be learners and allowed to learn (there is no scriptural argument for limiting the education of women). We must be careful here to affirm what the Bible plainly teaches. In the context of the formal worship service, a woman is not allowed to teach or rule over a man. Contextually, women are not to be ordained as elders or ministers. This does not mean that men must never learn from women, nor does it mean that women are not co-laborers with men in the work of the gospel ministry in general (Phil 4:3, Acts 18:26, Titus 2:4, Prov 1:8).

The reasons given are two, the nature of creation and the circumstances surrounding the fall. Notice that Paul does not appeal to the prevailing customs of Ephesus. In fact, this would be in direct contrast to those customs. Notice that it does correspond to the creation/marriage order and the gospel pictured in marriage. Men, representing Christ as elders, provide Word and sacrament to the church, corporately the bride of Christ, made up of men and women together.

Saved through The Childbirth (v15) – Finally, I believe verse 15 is cryptically teaching that woman (singular) will be saved through “the” (article is in the Greek) birth of the Messiah. Eve was deceived but was promised that her Seed (Mary bearing that Child) would bring forth salvation (Gen 3:13, 15). Paul then shifts to the plural, “if they continue in faith, love, holiness, with self-control.”

The Conscription of Women – Today, many evangelicals cannot make an argument for why women should not be allowed to fight on the front lines. The progressivist-egalitarians have made their case clear through compromises (i.e. lowering the weight limit of backpacks, reducing the size of grenades, etc) along with Hollywood-style, kinky, Ninja-warriorettes. Add to that the constant barrage of criticism if a woman is “just” a stay-at-home Mom, and our nation is ripe for the picking. Some conservatives have fought against this with the only weapon they thought they had: traditional family values and the relative strength of women. But what do the Scriptures teach?

The Garb of a Military Man (Deut 22:5) – “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.” The two restrictions are related but not parallel. A man is not to put on a woman’s garment; think transvestitism and all the related sexual-confusing situations we find ourselves in today. A woman is not to wear “anything that pertains to a man.” This is a rendering of *keli geber*, which literally refers to the gear of a warrior. This is not about what one wears at a costume party (although a case could be made). It is referring to a woman ever being placed in a situation where she fights like a mighty warrior. Because this is “an abomination to the LORD,” it is not a command like prohibitions against certain foods and linens. It is an abomination like sodomy and witchcraft.

The Natural Order of Things – Even that phrase makes our post-Christian culture shudder and this is because we have rejected the Imago Dei. A man’s central obligation before God is to provide for and protect his family (including protecting them from the encroachments of his own government). A woman’s central obligation is to bring forth and nurture life (in countless ways) for her family.