

In Search of Shepherds - Women in Ministry

REVIEW: We have been working our way through chronologically to show that eldership is the NT model when it comes to the leadership of a church. We have seen the birth of the church in Acts 2 (33 AD). From there we moved to the first mention of elders of a church in Acts 11 (45 AD). After that we jump to the book of James, which was written at about the same or shortly after the famine. In James he tells us the first duty of an elder, which is prayer for healing. Next up we watch Paul and Barnabas go on their first missionary journey in about 48 AD, and how they established elders in all the churches they formed. Then, in 49 AD comes the Jerusalem Council in which the apostles and the elders of the church in Jerusalem met to discuss an important theological issue that cropped up. In 51 AD the elders (the Bible says leaders, but the description sounds like elders) were admonishing the believers to not be lazy but to get to work. In 63 AD Paul writes to Timothy and codifies the requirements of character for an elder. We spent a lot of time here. Last week we moved on to the deacons, their ministry and their character.

INTRO: This week we come to the topic that causes the most contention where leadership is concerned, women and their role in leadership and ministry. To cover this topic I was faced with a choice. I could condense the topic into one sermon, hitting the applicable texts from Scripture, or I could go full boar and cover in GREAT detail the texts and the implications from each for women and their role in leadership. When I looked at option two, even I did not realize just how in depth one could go in this study.

In the end, I have opted to go for something in between the two extremes. We will be covering the relevant texts in the Bible as needed, and looking at the implications and applications to leadership in the church.

Today we start with the second most often contested text regarding women and their role in leadership: Galatians 3:28.

- I. Let's read Galatians 3:28
 - A. Does this not sound wonderful?
 1. In Jesus there is neither Jew or Gentile - awesome!
 2. Slave or free - even better - slavery is bad
 3. Male or female
 - B. There is a particular view point on this verse called the egalitarian view point
 1. Egalitarians view is that men and women are completely equal in all things and that this verse does away with gender specific roles
 2. There is no difference in significance, roles, or rights
 3. And this verse seems to prove out their thoughts

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- a) There is no male or female in Christ Jesus
 - b) So if you are a believer, God has done away with distinctions between the sexes
 - c) The old way of doing things is done and over
 - (1) No more sexism
 - (2) No more oppression of women
 - (3) No more male superiority
 - (4) We are all one in Christ
- C. Before I begin to address this view point and point out it's weaknesses, to be fair, I MUST point out its strengths, and where we would agree with them
- D. Agreement with egalitarians
1. The opposing view to egalitarianism is complementarianism
 - a) They, which I would be in this camp, say that men and women are absolutely equal, and deserve the same respect, the significance, but that there are roles for both men and women
 2. So here is where the two camps agree
 - a) Sexism - absolutely and unequivocally wrong
 - (1) Men are not superior because they are men
 - (2) Women are not superior because they are women - which often times, feminism swings the pendulum to this extreme
 - (3) So discrimination based on gender is wrong
 - b) Oppression of women is wrong
 - (1) We talked about this months ago - men have the tendency toward selfish aggression
 - (2) So either by verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, pornography, and many other ways, these are all examples of oppression, and both sides agree it is wrong
 - c) Both sides agree we are one in Christ
 - (1) When anyone places their faith in Jesus Christ, we are all one in Christ
 - (2) We hold equal significance
 - (a) Just because I am a man holds no bearing on my position in Christ - I don't get special privilege because of my gender
 - (b) Being a women does not make you a second class citizen, nor does it move you to the head of the class
 - (c) Just because in Bible times, one was a Jew, that does not mean you have any advantage over a Gentile
 3. These are the ways in which we agree

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4. Yet there are some significant differences, and today we are starting with this verse, Galatians 3:28 to uncover those differences

II. Context

A. We talk about context a lot when it comes to the Bible

1. Context matters
2. When things are taken out of context it can make all the difference in the meaning
 - a) That is basically the basis of every sit-com you ever watch
 - b) One person overhears a part of a conversation, and mayhem ensues
 - (1) They think someone is dying
 - (2) They think someone is pregnant
 - (3) They think someone is gay or not gay
 - (4) Name your mayhem, but we see this all the time, and it gives us a great understanding of how things can spiral out of control when things get taken out of context
 3. For example: This summer a man died at Cedar Point after going into an area that he was not supposed to be in to get his glasses or cell phone or something he dropped on a ride. Obviously he was struck by the ride in his efforts
 - a) Before we were going to take the kids to Cedar Point Mandy Schapman (and I asked permission to share this) said "I'm so glad that guy died..."
 - b) Now I know, and you know that Mandy had more to that statement than "I'm so glad he died"
 - c) But me being the pesky little brother type couldn't possibly let her finish that sentence without making fun of her
 - d) But imagine what we would think if that was the only part of Mandy's statement we heard - context (and in this case being able to finish your sentence is critical)

B. I bring all of this up because if we lift Galatians 3:28 out of its context, it seems to support the egalitarian view that everyone is equal and there are no distinctions

C. But reading Galatians 3:28 in context gives you a whole different view

1. So here we go, looking at the context of what Paul was saying around this sentence

III. The context of Galatians 3:28, and the problems associated with it

A. Let's start with an obvious problem contained within the verse itself

1. If we assume that the verse is saying that there is complete equality, and there are no distinctions because in Christ, they are all done away with, here is what that would mean

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2. When you accept Jesus Christ, you are no longer a Jew or a Gentile
 - a) You are a Christian
 - b) You give up all distinctions about being Jewish, or African, or Chinese, or Burmese, or Mexican, or American
 - c) You are a Christian and that is all that matters
 - (1) And while that is true in a sense - your race, your nationality has no bearing on your position in Christ
 - (2) Obviously it does not mean that the things that God created you to be cease to exist or even cease to be important or something that can be celebrated
 3. The same thing would be true regarding slave or free
 - a) If we assume no distinctions whatsoever, it would be the eradication of slavery at Paul's time
 - (1) Which, we know that was not what Paul was after - he sent Onesimus back to Philemon and did not try to change their social standing, but appealed to Philemon based on love in the faith
 - (2) The other problem, if that was what Paul had in mind, it would have been the collapse of society
 - (a) Remember that slavery then was not like slavery as we think of it
 - (b) It was more like the welfare system
 - (c) That does not mean that masters did not mistreat slaves - however, that was condemned by Paul and every passage that deals with slavery - as far back as the OT where God provided laws to protect slaves
 - b) But if Paul meant the eradication of slavery, it would have decimated the culture
 4. The same would be true with gender -
 - a) Paul was not seeking a genderless kingdom, or to do away with gender roles
 - b) It is not that gender ceased to exist
 - c) But gender was not a determining factor as to value in the kingdom of God
- B. The second problem with saying that these verses are speaking of doing away with gender roles is the context in which the verses sit
1. Go back up to Galatians 2:11ff - here is where Paul begins a protracted argument that leads to the context of our verse (Read 2:11-15)
 2. So here is what is happening - Peter had been eating with the Gentiles
 - a) Gentiles had no problem eating the blood of an animal, where Jews, used to the law, drained the blood from their food

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- b) When Jews and Gentiles were combining together in the same churches, this became a problem
- 3. So Peter is hanging with the Gentiles until some Jews from Jerusalem show up
 - a) Then Peter begins to extricate himself from the Gentiles and only eat with the Jews
 - b) He was scared of these guys from the “circumcision group”
 - (1) So not only were there table fellowship issues, but these guys believed that you had to be circumcised to get in on this new thing that God was up to
 - (2) In other words, you had to be Jewish to become a Christian
 - (3) By the way, these were all things that were dealt with at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 - Galatians was written shortly after the Jerusalem Council
 - c) Look at verse 14 - “they were not acting in accordance with the truth of the gospel”
 - (1) Paul equates this behavior with not being true to the gospel. But how?
 - (2) The gospel states that a person comes into the kingdom, not by works they do, not by who they are, but by justification through faith in Christ alone
 - (3) As soon as Peter backs away from being welcoming to the Gentiles out of fear of these Jews from Jerusalem, he is negating the confidence that we have in Christ alone
 - (4) Look back at verse 13 - other Jews and EVEN BARNABAS joined him
 - (a) This is a shocking statement!
 - (b) Barnabas is the “Son of Encouragement” - He couldn’t be fooled!
 - (c) But he was
- 4. So what is the big deal about this story?
 - a) It sets Paul on a tirade about the gospel
 - b) That it is only through Christ that we have salvation
 - c) AND, this is key, that if it is justification through Christ alone, all previous things that might cause division are gone
 - (1) Jew/Gentile - Race - He is making his argument on this because of the example of Peter, rather than the other areas - He adds those too to round things out
 - (2) Slave/Free - Social
 - (3) Male/Female - Gender

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- (4) We are all on the same playing field before Christ, and we are all one in Christ
 - (a) One with His mission
 - (b) One with His purpose
 - (c) One body - that has many different parts (Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, males and females)
 - d) This is the purpose of Paul's statement in 3:28 - NOT gender roles
- C. The third problem those that want to make this verse about equality in roles is the phrase from 3:28 "for you are all one in Christ"
 - 1. To believe as those that seek equality in roles do, means you have to believe that the phrase means "you are all equal in Christ"
 - 2. The problem with that is twofold:
 - a) First, the word "one" - in all of Greek literature, there is not a single example of this word meaning equal
 - b) Second, there exists a resource out there called *The Greek Linguistic Thesaurus* and it takes all known Greek literature for 3 centuries around the biblical time period (2 centuries before Christ and 1 after)
 - (1) Having run searches through it, 16 expressions were found in ALL of Greek literature that were similar to the expression in 3:28
 - (2) None of them spoke of equality
 - (3) In fact, they were all speaking of multiple diversity, being one
 - (a) E.G. "The Father and I are one"
 - (b) "we who are many are one body in Christ"
 - (c) "Simeon and Levi are two in number but one in will" - from Philo (not a biblical source)
 - c) I could talk on this for quite some time, but the point is simple, in the Greek language, it is impossible to say that the phrase "for you are all one in Christ" means equal in Christ
- IV. I want to shift gears for a minute to talk about the culture in which this was written
 - A. Name some places today that you think are oppressive to women (culture or country)
 - 1. The places that came up in my internet search: Afghanistan, the Congo (one site describing the rapes as "brutal and systematic"), Iraq, Nepal, Sudan, Pakistan, Saudia Arabia, Somalia
 - 2. Most are Muslim cultures
 - 3. I will not describe what is done in those cultures today that oppress women - but most of us have some idea
 - a) I will only say that for some of these places, it is far worse than you think

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- B. I ask you to get that in your mind, because women were oppressed in the Jewish culture in very large ways
 - 1. Josephus, a late first century historian said this, “Woman is inferior to man in every way.” - this is the culture we are talking about
 - 2. It is most difficult to find any statement about equality between the sexes in the texts from ancient times - except Christianity
 - 3. Into this culture you have Jesus step in
 - a) Jesus calls women that are broken and bleeding “daughter”
 - b) Jesus has women that are followers of his, often going with his disciples in their travels
 - c) Jesus raises the level of women allowing them to sit at His feet like any man, and be taught
 - 4. Into this culture you have Paul
 - a) Paul has been maligned for being a misogynist, but that is far from the truth
 - b) Robin Scroggs, a liberal scholar writes, “It is time...to say loudly and clearly that Paul is, so far from being a chauvinist, the only certain and consistent spokesman for the liberation and equality of women in the NT”
 - c) Paul does write Galatians 3:28 which was revolutionary
 - (1) Jews and Gentiles are on the same playing field?
 - (2) Men and women??? Shocking stuff
 - (3) But Paul’s point is that in Christ, what divides us no longer divides - we are united as one because of Christ
- C. Now, let’s go back to where we started, Galatians 3:28 and read that again
 - 1. Now, let me read to you a common morning prayer for a Jewish man at the time of Paul
 - 2. “Blessed be God that he did not make me a Gentile; blessed be God that he did not make me ignorant (or a slave); blessed be God that he did not make me a woman.”
 - a) So the free Jewish male is celebrating all three things that Paul is obliterating with this verse
 - b) There is no Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, because Christ has made us one
 - 3. Far from the common picture that people often get of Paul hating on women, here we see that Paul is actually lifting women up!
 - a) In that culture, women were not held in high regard
 - b) And Paul is bringing them up on the same playing field
- V. With all of that said, we have to answer a final question regarding this verse: does this verse mean that roles for men or women are abolished?

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- A. There is nothing in this verse, due to the context, and the wording of the verse itself that would indicate that Paul was attempting to say that the roles that men have held, and the roles that women have held are done away with
 - B. On the other hand, the verse is screaming that the sinful behavior that resulted from the fall of man, that has overtaken the culture, has to be thrown out
 - 1. This is why I started the entire series about elders with God's design for us as men and women
 - 2. In Paul's day, self-aggression reigned supreme in men, to the point that men did not even realize how far outside the bounds they were
 - a) Paul is pulling them back in
 - b) Showing them that in Christ, we fall back to God's original design
 - (1) Yes, men were designed for headship
 - (2) But NEVER for domination
 - 3. In Christ, we hold the same standing
 - C. All of this is to say, that while this verse absolutely affirms women's worth, and value as daughters of the king
 - 1. It in no way refers to a change of roles
 - 2. The people that attempt to say this are fighting against the plain language used, as well as the greater context
 - D. This is the prime verse that is used to try to prove that in Christ the roles that had been observed for men and women are done away with
 - 1. The problem is, that idea falls short
- VI. So we are addressing women in ministry
- A. I said earlier that this is the second most contested text in the Bible regarding women
 - B. In two weeks (notice how I am skipping town after starting this topic) we move on to the most contested text in Scripture 1 Timothy 2
 - C. Please make sure you hear my heart on this
 - 1. I am not here to defend a viewpoint and then go to the Bible to try to prove it
 - a) That is called eisogizing - taking ideas from outside the text of the Bible and trying to force them into the Bible
 - 2. I am here to do my best to understand what God's Word says
 - a) Which starts with what did it mean in that day
 - b) How does that translate into today
 - c) And how does that apply to us in this century