

“Oneness”

Spring Series 1

Lesson 6

“Galatians 3:28 and Other Relevant Information”

Objective: To examine the Scriptures in order to seek understanding and guidance on how we are to work together as the people of God using all the gifts and resources that God has bestowed upon the Church. Through the centuries the relationship of men and women and their service to God has been hotly debated and continually examined. We consider what we are undertaking here to be a continuation of that debate and dialogue as we carefully and prayerfully seek the guidance of God through His Word and His Spirit. We are people of the Book and it is to the book that we look for answers to our questions, not to traditions, to science, or to society.

Materials: The Bible, Ancient translations, Commentaries, both ancient and modern, Books, journal articles, dictionaries, the internet, inscriptions, Ancient letters, Ancient Documents, lectures and other resources as may be appropriate.

Procedures

1. To explore the message of God in the hope of understanding more fully its meaning first as it was understood by the original audiences of Scripture and what they will have understood as God’s will for their lives in community.
2. To understand how Scripture has inspired, challenged, and educated people down through the centuries guiding them not only in their personal lives, but in their vocation as image-bearers of God.
3. We will seek to find out how beliefs have played a role in the history of Christianity and how they continue to impact our existence and service to Jesus Christ in the world today.
4. We will provide a sheet to take home as a reminder of what has been examined and to provide additional opportunities for consideration of these matters and their application in order to live out daily our eternal destiny. This sheet can be used as a discussion guide for small group discussion.

As we begin this week, let us review some of what we have covered in previous lessons. In Genesis 1 we saw that God created human beings in His image, male and female with no sense of hierarchy between them. In chapter 2 the male and female are created to serve together in mutual support of one another, as partners in their mission as God's representatives of unity ("oneness") in the Garden. At chapter 3, rebellion and distrust wrecked the perfect unity ("oneness") created by God and the things of God were broken: no longer the very good creation that He had made (no longer was creation functioning as a single organism). It is here, in this brokenness, that we find the introduction of hierarchy between the man and the woman broached for the first time. It comes as a consequence of the broken relationships between the man and the woman, and between the human beings and God. We have barriers erected between people, and between God and people, as a result of mistrust. In both 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians Paul will address specific problems within the churches at Ephesus and Corinth respectively. He will call each group to order and unity, a direct undermining of the hierarchalism that would have been dominant

in the culture of the day. He promotes “unity” and “oneness” in the assembly by those called to act as the representative of God (the church) in a world that is dominated by patriarchalism, disparity, injustice, and sin.¹

As we come to Galatians 3:28, we find Paul once again addressing the issue of “oneness,” but this time in multiple categories of division (i.e. Jew and Gentile; slave and free; male and female). Some have seen our current series as only being about the role of women and men in the assembly of God’s people, and certainly there is a component of that in this study. However, that does not stand at the center of Scripture nor does it stand at the core of the proclamations made by our Elders here. At the core of our current study is the fact that we are called as human beings into the mission of God, to partner together with Him (though we are certainly not equal partners with Him) to reconcile and rescue His creation from the chaos and disorder introduced by His image-bearers (human-beings) and perpetuated and expanded with each passing generation. The

¹ Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 41.1 (1973), pp. 30-48.



coming of Christ began the process of redemption in a new and powerful way; He is the agent of change and reconciliation.

As partners in the mission of God we are called to fulfill our original mandate as His image-bearers. The original call, in Genesis 1, was for male and female to reflect the image of God as a community together, striving in unity; to proclaim God's sovereignty as Creator. This task cannot be accomplished by one person alone, or merely by unconnected individuals, it must be done in community. The creation account calls for human beings to work in concert with one another and in that working together we can begin to catch a glimpse of the image a God in His community as it displays the unity, order and community of God as He intended. In community we can devote ourselves to the plan and will of a good and loving God, who knows what is best and created something very good as a reflection of Himself. We are called to trust and obey God.

Much has been lost, damaged and destroyed, by the mistrust of humans toward God and one another. The power of God, to overcome mistrust is demonstrated most powerfully in His great love conveyed in Jesus Christ. For it is in Jesus, that God calls His

erring children home, to reclaim their place as His image-bearers and representatives.

Jesus uniquely heals this mistrust and allows humanity to live into the fullness of God's call for "oneness." The image of God is not reflected simply in male and female, but in Jew and Greek, slave and free, in unity.² When we, His children, come together with God, and with each other, the things that divide and separate us will fall away. Paul points to 3 separate pairings, which at the outset seem completely unrelated to one another, but in actuality they express divisions that were separating the Galatian church and the ancient world. He uses these 3 pairs as a merism (representing the whole by mentioning the extremes).³

Paul speaks in terms of distinctions that were current and prominent in his day. Paul does not tell the Galatians to destroy

² Passages that focus on the nature of God as "one" and New Testament passages link to the Old Testament ideas of "oneness." Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; Zechariah 14:9; Mark 12:29, 32; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; 12:13; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19. There are others, but this is a sampling.

³ Ben Witherington III, "Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28," *New Testament Studies* 27:5 (1981), pp. 593-604. "Hermippus in his Lives refers to Thales the story which is told by some of Socrates, namely, that he used to say there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: "first, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian." Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 1.1 Thales, in Robert Drew Hicks, ed. and trans, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers by Diogenes*, in the Loeb Classical Library, 184, 185 Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015) p. 35. 'R. Judah says, "A person must recite three blessings every day: 'Praised are you, O Lord, who has not made me a gentile,' 'Praised are you, O Lord, who did not make me a boor,' and 'Praised are you, O Lord, who did not make me a woman.'"' *Babylonian Talmud*, "Bavli Menahot," 43b.

these distinctions, or that God has, but rather to view them in the proper light; to orient them to the service of the one person unity (into the body of Christ) found by Christians in Christ. He rejects their abuse, not their proper usage. He does not say that Gentiles must become Jews, or that women must be linked to men, or become men, or that slaves must be freed in order to have a standing before God. The emphasis is found to be upon the one person unity of the body of Christ, which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Gentiles remain Gentiles, slaves remain slaves, and women remain women; as Christians though, they all stand as equals at the foot of the cross. Women need not be linked to a male to have a primary role in Christ as they had to be linked to a male in Judaism. Being a part of the one new person, Christ, by faith, is the only thing we “must” all share in common, together with its sign, baptism. Any other categories apart from being a part of the one body of Christ must be sub-headings that *serve* and do not *sever*, or divide the Body of Christ.⁴

In Judaism, there was a blessing recited daily by male Jews because they, the men, were allowed full participation in Judaism.

⁴ Ben Witherington III, “Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28,” *New Testament Studies* 27:5 (1981), pp. 593-604.

Women though had restrictions that kept them from full participation. They could not bear the mark of circumcision, this was for males alone. They were restricted in their access at the festivals and to the sacrifices because of monthly ritual impurity and when they bore a child. Paul is countering these kinds of restrictions and distinctions which were advocated by the Judaizers. Paul was arguing that ethnic, social, and sexual distinctions cannot be used as a determining factor for full participation in the Christian community.

The main problem in Galatia was not with gender, or slavery, but between Judaizers (those that would force, or at least encourage Gentiles to become Jews) and those that the Judaizers saw as second class Christians at best, the Gentiles. Circumcision and observance of the Law are being used as an entrance requirement for full participation, and full partnership in the Christian community and they are thus dividing the community. Judaizers are saying that justification (right standing before God, ultimately salvation) is linked to obedience and works and not simply to trusting God and His grace.⁵

⁵ Ben Witherington III, "Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28," *New Testament Studies* 27:5 (1981), pp. 593-604.

Paul indicates that the Judaizers have succeeded in getting the Galatians to observe "...special days, and months, and seasons, and years."⁶ This is of huge significance because the Galatians were not only observing the rite of circumcision, but also certain periodic times when a Gentile's and a female's position in such a community would certainly be inferior to that of the Jewish males. The females could not be circumcised, and would not be able to observe the periodic festival times because menstruation could render them unclean at precisely the wrong moment. How then was it possible for women to be saved if such matters were crucial for salvation? Such people would be relegated to a lower status, or even excluded within the Christian community. The answer given by rabbinic Judaism was that they must marry and bear children so that by their connection to a circumcised male (husband or son) they could assume a place in the community.⁷

Paul pushes back hard against these divisions. He focuses on "oneness" in Christ. "Oneness," or unity, is a signal that people are pursuing God, building community, and allowing God to

⁶ Galatians 4:10-11. "You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. ¹¹ I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted." CEB.

⁷ Ben Witherington III, "Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28," *New Testament Studies* 27:5 (1981), pp. 593-604.

unleash compassion into the world through them. Our goal in this study, as N. T. Wright so capably proclaims is, "... to renounce the moulds into which the world around tries to squeeze us, and to embrace the different way which is the way of God's kingdom, in which, yet, we discover the fulfillment of God's created plan and order."⁸

It was the case that both within Judaism and in the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire the matter of remaining single in society was frowned upon. Sparta imposed fines upon bachelors because being single was seen as matter of public disgrace. In Athens a childless man was excluded from holding public office. Plato indicated that there was an obligation to the state to procreate. In Judaism it was considered a divine command to procreate.⁹ Paul argues that what distinguishes the Christian is not their marital status, but rather their status as children of God. At Galatians 3:25-26 he states, "**But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,**"²⁶

⁸ N. T. Wright, "Women's Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis," A conference paper for the Symposium, **Men, Women and the Church**, St. John's College, Durham, September 4 2004. pp. 1-20.

⁹ Ben Witherington III, "Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28," *New Testament Studies* 27:5 (1981), pp. 593-604.

for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.”¹⁰

As we come to verse 27 Paul underlines that those that have been baptized are now “clothed” with Christ.¹¹

The crucial things according to Paul in becoming a member of the community of Jesus Christ are baptism, faith, and community, and these things are drawn from the personal experience of those of the church in Galatia. He specifically tells them that they are “no longer under the supervision of the law.” “Our union as ‘one person’ in Christ is theologically prior to and more primary than the obvious distinctions which do and should exist in the covenant community.”¹² To be a Christian for Paul is to be a member of the “one body” of Jesus Christ.¹³ The issue of being “one” is related to the nature of God Himself who is “one.” Jesus asserts the importance of His “oneness” with his Father several times throughout John’s gospel (at John 10:16;¹⁴ 10:30;¹⁵

¹⁰ CEB.

¹¹ **As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** CEB.

¹² Ben Witherington III, “Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28,” *New Testament Studies* 27:5 (1981), pp. 593-604.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

¹⁴ “I have other sheep that don’t belong to this sheep pen. I must lead them too. They will listen to my voice and there will be **one** flock, with **one** shepherd.” CEB.

¹⁵ “I and the Father are **one**.” CEB.

17:11;¹⁶ 17:22¹⁷). The analogy between the assertion of the “oneness” between Jesus and His Father on the one hand, and the “oneness” of the disciples on the other, can only be fully comprehended within the context of Jewish monotheistic understandings.¹⁸

The background for idea of the “one” united people corresponding to the “one” God is likely to be found in the context of 2 Samuel 7:22-24.¹⁹ The repeated usage of the theme of “oneness” is connected distinctly to Israel as the “one” unique people of God in a way that corresponds to YHWH as being the “one” unique God also in Ezekiel 37:15-28. Jewish writers perceived the “one” God as corresponding to “one” in other instances as well such as: “one” holy city, “one” temple, “one”

¹⁶ “I’m no longer in the world, but they are in the world, even as I’m coming to you. Holy Father, watch over them in your name, the name you gave me, that they will be **one** just as we are **one**.” CEB.

¹⁷ “I’ve given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be **one** just as we are **one**.” CEB.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), p. 104.

¹⁹ “That is why you are so great, LORD God! No one can compare to you, no god except you, just as we have always heard with our own ears. ²³ And who can compare to your people Israel? They are the **one** nation on earth that God redeemed as his own people, establishing his name by doing great and awesome things for them, by driving out nations and their gods before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt. ²⁴ You established your people Israel as your own people forever, and you, LORD, became their God.” CEB

altar, “one” law, and especially “one” chosen people.²⁰

Formulations such as these are likely the background, along with “the Shema,” that stand behind the list of seven “ones” given in Ephesians 4:4-5 by Paul. Josephus and Philo understood the correspondence of the people of God to correlate with the unity of God in the sense that the worship and service of the “one” God unites the people of God into “one” as a reflection of God’s “oneness.”²¹

“The divine singularity draws the singular people of God together into a relational unity. It is this kind of unity that the

²⁰ A. F. J. Klijn, trans., in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, In The Anchor Bible Reference Library, Vol. 1 (New York NY: Doubleday, 1983), p. 636. ² *Baruch* 48:23-24; “We shall always be blessed; at least, we did not mingle with the nations. For we are all a people of the Name’ ²⁴ we, who received one law from the One. And that Law that is among us will help us, and that excellent wisdom which is in us will support us.” Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4.201 “In no other city let there be either altar or temple; for God is one and the Hebrew race is one. H. St. J. Thackeray, and Ralph Marcus, trans., *Josephus Jewish Antiquities Books IV-VI*, in the Loeb Classical Library series, vol. 490 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 98-99. 5.111 “After this discourse of Phinees, the presidents of the assembly and the whole multitude themselves began to disclaim the crimes wherewith they were charged saying that neither would they renounce their kinship to their brethren, nor had they erected the altar with revolutionary intent: nay, they recognized but one God, owned by all Hebrews alike, and the brazen altar before the tabernacle whereupon the sacrifice should be offered.” H. St. J. Thackeray, and Ralph Marcus, trans., *Josephus Jewish Antiquities Books IV-VI*, pp. 210-213. *Against Apion* 2.193 “We have but one temple for the one God (for like ever loveth like), common to all as God is common to all.” H. St. Thackeray, trans. *Josephus The Life Against Apion*, in the Loeb Classical Library series, vol.186 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) pp. 370-371. Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.52 “For the most effectual love-charm, the chain which binds indissolubly the goodwill which makes us one is to honour the one God.” 67. But he provided that there should not be temples built either in many places or many in the same place, for he judged that since God is one, there should be also only one temple.” F. H. Colson, trans., *Philo Volume VII*, in the Loeb Classical Library series, vol. 320 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 138-139. Cf. also A. F. J. Klijn, trans., in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, p. 2 *Baruch* 85:14; “Therefore, there is one Law, by One, one world and an end for all those who exist.”

²¹ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, p. 105.

Johannine Jesus desires for his people. He prays that his disciples would be a single community corresponding to the uniqueness of the one God in which he and his Father are united (17:11, 22).²² When the people of God are united into the “one” body of Jesus Christ it is as this unity that they are in a position to convey the image of God. Their unity then is a reflection and a representation of the unity of God Himself. The unity of the church then fulfills the role of image-bearer, when all of the unique and individual parts of that body function in congruity as a single organism. “Oneness,” stands at the heart of the mission of God for His people.

When the people of God perceive this, and live in alignment with God’s heart, the petty bickering about who is in charge, and who is boss, will fall away, because everyone will know and trust that God is in charge. His people will use every ounce of their strength and power to project His will and plan more and more fully into this creation; in unity with God and with one another. God’s people will use all of the gifts that God has bestowed upon them to proclaim the sovereignty and “oneness” of God. Paul came to understand that this was the relationship of Jesus to His

²² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, p. 105.

Father as God's agent of change and reconciliation. Paul was confronted with this truth as he travelled on the road to Damascus on his mission of persecuting Christians. He came to understand that Jesus had opened the way, to fulfilling the intent of God for creation as the "one" standing in unity with God, and "one" with Him in His power.²³

As we come to Galatians 3:28, first we need to state that some translations make all three categories of couplets in this verse symmetrical in ways that are not in the Greek text **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ."**²⁴ More literally, and in line with what the Greek text actually says, here is a closer rendition of what was recorded by Paul: **"There is not Jew nor Greek, nor is there slave nor free, nor is there male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."**²⁵ The first thing that can be said here is that Galatians 3 is not just about the worship assembly. Galatians 3:28 comes in the context of what it

²³ 2 Corinthians 4:4 - **The god of this age has blinded the minds of those who don't have faith so they couldn't see the light of the gospel that reveals Christ's glory. Christ is the image of God.** CEB.

²⁴ King James Version. None of the newer versions make this mistake.

²⁵ Literal translation done directly from the Greek text.

means for people to be clothed with Christ in their baptism into Christ as His people.

“The point Paul is making overall in this passage is that God has one family, not two, and this family consists of all those who believe in Jesus; that this is the family God promised to Abraham, and nothing in the Torah can stand in the way of this unity which is now revealed through the faithfulness of the Messiah. This is not about how we relate to one another within this single family; it is about the fact, as we often say, that the ground is even at the foot of the cross.”²⁶ Hogan says, “... there is no extant textual proof that Gal. 3:28 was understood as a manifesto for early Christian feminism, or egalitarianism.”²⁷ That is not the issue here. The issue that stands at the heart of the study we have engaged in is far more pervasive, and broad, than the narrow topic of the role of men and women in the church. The issue is related integrally to the overall mission of the church and how to accomplish that mission in a manner that reflects God’s intent for the family of Abraham; his one family that is redeemed through Jesus Christ.

²⁶ N. T. Wright, “Women’s Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis,” A conference paper for the Symposium, **Men, Women and the Church**, St. John’s College, Durham, September 4 2004. pp. 1-20.

²⁷ Pauline Nigh Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, the Library of New Testament Studies, Vol. 380 (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 2008), p. 193.

Paul does not mean that, in Christ, the created order is undone. He is not saying that we are returning back to a kind of chaos in which the order of creation no longer applies. Paul is also not saying, like the gnostics, that we are moving on from the first rather shabby creation in which silly things like differentiation of gender no longer apply and we will all come to live as hermaphrodites (a person having both male and female sexual organs and characteristics). Paul is a theologian of new creation and he speaks of the renewal and reconciliation of the existing creation, never a denial of it. He makes this assertion in Romans 8:19-23. Genesis 1-3 remains tremendously important for the Apostle Paul throughout his writings. Paul writes this Galatians passage to directly dispute those who wanted to enforce Jewish regulations, and Jewish ethnicity upon Gentile converts in a manner that undoes what the church is all about.²⁸ God is uniting His people in Christ, through grace and faith.

As has been said before, Paul is aware of the prayer used in the synagogue that Jewish men prayed daily, thanking God that they had not been made a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. Paul is

²⁸ N. T. Wright, "Women's Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis," A conference paper for the Symposium, **Men, Women and the Church**, St. John's College, Durham, September 4 2004. pp. 1-20.

deliberately disputing the validity of this prayer. He deliberately marks out the family of Abraham, reformed in the Messiah, as a people who **cannot** pray that prayer. These family distinctions are now irrelevant with regard to membership in the one body of Christ.²⁹ He does not say that male and female, slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile, no longer exist. The differences then do still exist, what He is saying is that they are all a part of the single family of God and there are no second class Christians in this family. They are all part of the family of Abraham because of the promise that was made to Abraham and as such their diversity becomes unity into one body serving to reflect the nature of God Himself as “one,” in the “oneness” of His people.

²⁹ N. T. Wright, “Women’s Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis,” A conference paper for the Symposium, **Men, Women and the Church**, St. John’s College, Durham, September 4 2004. pp. 1-20.

Appendix 1: Examples of Women in the New Testament

We see this “oneness” reflected in the ministry of Jesus and His followers. There were many examples of women serving important and powerful functions in service of Christ and during the period of the early church. One was certainly Mary (the mother of Jesus) herself; it was through her that God chose to bring His son into the world. Luke records her words as Scripture.³⁰ We are also told of “a prophet,” Anna the daughter of Phanuel. She never left the temple area and worshipped God with fasting and prayer night and day. She approached Joseph and Mary in the Temple and praised God and spoke “...about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”³¹

Woman play a huge role in the dynamic of John’s account of the Gospel. Mary Magdalene is the very first person to see the resurrected Jesus and the very first to proclaim the fact of the

³⁰ Luke 1:46-55.

³¹ Luke 2:36-38. CEB.

resurrection, “I have seen the Lord.”³² She became the apostle to the Apostles.

The account of the Samaritan woman in the Gospel is also highly significant in understanding the attitude of Jesus toward women. The account of her encounter with Jesus focuses upon overcoming significant deterrents and barriers (e.g. male-female, Jewish-Samaritan). As a result of the Samaritan **women’s testimony** an entire Samaritan village confesses that Jesus is “Savior of the world.”³³

Mary and Martha also play a significant role in Jesus’ life and teaching.³⁴ They are critical characters in the ministry of Jesus and for those who know that culture they will be aware of how Jesus breaks cultural norms both in teaching women and in letting them be an active part of His ministry in the way that He does.

As we come to the time after Pentecost we need to remember the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost when he recites the prophesy of Joel regarding the pouring out of His Spirit

³² John 20:18 “Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her.” CEB.

³³ John 4:42.

³⁴ Frank Wheeler, “Women in the Gospel of John,” in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II (Joplin MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), pp. 197-224.

on “all people.” He then specifically indicates that this pouring out of His Spirit will not be upon the Jews only, but on “all people.” He then goes onto say that their “...sons and daughters will prophesy.”³⁵ This then is reiterated in 2:18 where we have recorded these words: **Even upon my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.**³⁶ The gift of the Holy Spirit is for men and women, every ethnicity, and every nationality.

In Romans Paul mentions Phoebe who was a “servant” (*διάκονον* - *diakonon* = “**deacon**”) and was also a “benefactor” (*προστάτις* - *prostatis* - which can mean a “ruler,” a “leader,” a “patron,” or a “benefactor”). In 1 Timothy 3:11 there is an indication that Paul is talking about “female deacons.” Then we come to Prisca (Priscilla):³⁷ Of particular interest with regard to her is the fact that in 18:18, 28, Romans 16:3 and 2 Timothy 4:19 Prisca is mentioned before her husband. This fact has generated tremendous speculation that she was of higher rank than her husband and maybe even took the lead in their Christian ministry.

³⁵ Acts 2:17.

³⁶ CEB.

³⁷ Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.



None of this is certain, but what can be said is that there is nothing in Luke's account to indicate that a woman can teach a man only with her husband, or that it must be done in private. There is also nothing to indicate that a woman can only instruct another woman. Throughout Scripture, Prisca and Aquila are portrayed as equals. They share their ministry in partnership with one another.³⁸ This is just a sampling of the how women are seen functioning in the New Testament.

³⁸ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church* (Abilene TX: ACU Press, 2001), pp. 139-154.

Appendix 2: Some Excerpts from History

After the time of Paul, especially during the Constantinian establishment of the church, women served in ministry as widows, nuns, abbesses, deaconesses, presbyters and at least one was a bishop. “We Christian Churches and Churches of Christ often claim to be only biblical, but when we insist that women cannot lead, we follow a restrictive tradition rooted in Greco-Roman patriarchal culture and Constantinian-established Christianity. We share much with Roman Catholics, but our sense of the priesthood of all believers which began at adult baptism does not allow us to share with them a sense of a priesthood limited to celibate males.”³⁹

In A.D. 800 the ratio of men to women was 112 men for every 100 women. Men survived longer than women. By the thirteenth century the ratio had become approximately 103-105 women to 100 men. This growth in the longevity of women is accredited to the culture becoming more Christianized and protecting the physically weak, and this included women who survived longer because of this protection. To understand the

³⁹ Fredrick W. Norris, “Women Ministers in Constantinian Christianity,” in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 357-374.

history of women in the European Middle Ages, it is critical that one have an understanding of how medieval attitudes toward women were shaped. Commonly people have made the assumption that all such attitudes can be traced back to an origin within how certain New Testament texts were interpreted. This view is too simplistic and incorrect. Attitudes toward women emerged from several sources and only marginally from Scripture.⁴⁰

Early on in the church, women were recognized as prophets, missionaries, martyrs, and spiritual leaders. Classical thought had a major impact on the view of women in this period, which largely followed in the footsteps of Aristotle. He cast women as the imperfect version of the male, with subordination being seen as inevitable for them as the weaker vessel. This, along with a Platonic legacy that later emerged heavily in Neoplatonism, meant that the old hierarchalism of the Greeks dominated church thought. Augustine and Jerome added to the perception that the only good and trustworthy woman was a dead virgin.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Dale Pauls, "Women in the European Middle Ages," in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 375-400.

⁴¹ Dale Pauls, "Women in the European Middle Ages," in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 375-400.

In A. D. 1073, Hildebrand became pope as Gregory VII and began a huge reform movement within the Catholic church. The reformers in this movement championed the view that clergy should be ascetics. The reformers were determined to destroy the aristocratic stranglehold on the church. They sought to do this by eliminating landowner's making the controlling decisions with regard to church affairs and church property. Their two part strategy included: 1. Ending lay control of church patronage such as the appointment of abbots, priests, and bishops. 2. Additionally, in the case of priests and bishops, they sought to achieve complete clerical celibacy, thus eliminating priestly dynasties that sometimes kept church property in their families for generations. With the elimination of marriage, they eliminated legitimate children for the priests and bishops and thus their properties would revert to the control of the church. Until recently this reform movement was perceived as an anti-corruption campaign that was viewed favorably by historians. However, it had a devastating impact on woman and their standing in the church.⁴²

⁴² Dale Pauls, "Women in the European Middle Ages," in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 375-400.

To undermine and destroy clerical marriage these reformers launched powerful and vitriolic attacks on females. Women were equated with uncontrollable sexuality, irrationality, and demonic temptation. One of those reformers was Peter Damian, who had himself been abandoned by his mother at an early age and was exposed to a childhood of frequent batterings. He addressed the following diatribe to the wives of the clergy:⁴³

I speak to you, O charmers of the clergy,
appetizing flesh of the devil, that castaway
from paradise, you, poison of the minds,
deaths of souls, venom of wine and of
eating, companions of the very stuff of sin,
the cause of our ruin ... you women of the
ancient enemy, you bitches, sows, screech-
owls, night-owls, she-wolves, blood-
suckers ... hear me, harlots, prostitutes,
with your lascivious kisses, you wallowing
places for fat pigs, couches for unclean
spirits, demi-goddesses, sirens, witches,

⁴³ Dale Pauls, "Women in the European Middle Ages," in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 375-400.

devotees of Diana ... the ancient foe pants
to invade the summit of the church's
chastity through you You suck the
blood of miserable, unwary men, so that
you might inflate into their inmost parts a
lethal poison. They should kill you.⁴⁴

Finally, in the twelfth century, official church legislation put an official end to church marriages. The first Lateran Council (A.D. 1123) annulled existing clerical marriages, and then the Second Lateran Council (A.D. 1139) decreed that ordination automatically invalidated marriage. The consequences of these changes were enormous, leaving broken marriages and broken homes all across rural Europe. These women and their children were left destitute, facing starvation, prostitution, slavery, murder, and suicide.⁴⁵ Even more surprising perhaps is that none of the hundreds of

⁴⁴ Peter Damian, "Women who seduced clerics," in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus [Series Græca]: ... Omnium Ss. Patrum, Doctorum, Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum Sive Latinorum Sive Græcorum ...*, vol. 145 (Charleston SC: Nabu Press, 2010) pp. 410ff. Dale Pauls, "Women in the European Middle Ages," in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 375-400.

⁴⁵ Dale Pauls, "Women in the European Middle Ages," in Carroll D. Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. II, pp. 375-400.

decrees on celibacy across the centuries of debate show any concern at all for the fate of these women and children.⁴⁶

There is much more that could be said on this subject. As a part of our efforts to become what God has called us to become as His image-bearers we need to be able to examine with fresh eyes the Scriptures, the impact of millennia of indoctrination, especially from Hellenistic sources that early on infiltrated Judaism, especially through Philo and Josephus, and then the church. Greek influences have impacted how words were understood and passages of Scripture were interpreted. This influence continued and grew in context of the Roman Catholic church for a plethora of reasons, but largely out of an effort to consolidate power and property. Fear, of women also was a major force in sidelining women and even generating the image of the ideal woman that allowed them, during the Victorian period, and beyond, to be cast aside in many ways and left cloistered away in a new manner.

In order to truly reflect the unity and “oneness” that God calls His people to, we must be willing to move ahead without the fears generated by our pagan past and be willing to embrace the

⁴⁶ Bernard Verkamp, “Cultic Purity and the Law of Celibacy,” *Review for Religious* 30:2 (1971), pp. 199-217.



vision of a Creator God who could describe His creation as very good. He calls us to join with each other and with Him in reconciling that creation back to that “very good” state that is conceived in the heart and mind of God and powerfully demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus as the example of who and what we are called to become in His “one” body and as His “one” people.

Appendix 3: Translations that are Literal and with Running Commentary

Literal translation:

Galatians 3:27 For you are all sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus. 28 There is not Jew nor Greek, nor is there slave nor free, nor is there male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

The Message:

Galatians 3:27 But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ’s life, the fulfillment of God’s original promise. 28 In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal.⁴⁷

The Common English Bible:

Galatians 3:27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (MSG), Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002.

⁴⁸ CEB.

Synopsis

This lesson aligns with our other lessons where we have seen the importance of unity, of “oneness.” Paul here proclaims that the “oneness” that God created in the beginning has become a reality in the church. The grace of God brings into reality the one family that was promised to Abraham and was His design from the beginning. That one family is called to project into creation the nature of God Himself through the one body of Christ. God is one and His people are “one” with one another and with God in the way He always intended.

In Galatia there were Judaizers that were trying to get the Gentiles to follow Judaism as an element of their salvation. This teaching Paul states is wrong and he calls upon his audience to recognize that what God has done by His grace and through the sending of Jesus means that those who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ and are now a part of the “one body” of Christ. It is in this “one body” that the old distinctions, the old dividing walls that separated people from one another and from God have been obliterated through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Unity is a mark of the presence of the people of God and of His effective working in the lives and souls. The old barriers such as being Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female have been removed in the sense of acting as barriers of separation. The ground at the foot of the cross is level.

In the ministry of Jesus and in the early church women played an integral role in the proclamation of the Gospel and were accepted as full members of the church and not restricted by the punishment of Genesis 3 from serving.

It was over many years that the early church began to more and more see hierarchalism as a part of the structure of the church. In that hierarchalism more and more women were restricted in their ministry within the church and even in their standing as members of the church. They were dramatically affected by the background of Hellenism, Jewish ideas, and by fear and concerns for power and authority within the Roman Catholic church. Many of these dramatic changes did not come into being until the twelfth century.

We are called to a “oneness” that comes through the grace of God and we are called to use our gifts in service of His “one body” as we stand at the level ground at the foot of the cross.

Questions

1. Why do you think God created human beings?
2. What are some ways that people demonstrate trust?
3. What are some ways that people demonstrate that they do not have trust?
4. Why do you think “unity” in the church is so important?
5. Why do you think that disruptions and disagreements in the assembly are so important to Paul?
6. How important do you think “unity” should be for us today?
7. How would you define “oneness?”
8. If God gives a gift to someone do you think God expects them to use that gift in His kingdom?
9. What are some things that divide people in our church today?
10. Why do you think Paul mentions “baptism” in the context of his statements on Galatians 3:28?
11. What does it mean to be a part of the “one body” of Christ?
12. How do you think the context of the Roman world and the daily prayers in Judaism affected Paul’s choice of speaking about “men and women?”
13. In what ways were women in Judaism not able to participate as fully as men in Judaism?
14. How does Paul address the Judaizers in Galatia?
15. What role does “faith” play in the arguments of Paul in Galatians?

16.What are some ways that you see “oneness” as a reflection of the nature of God?

17.Why do you think Jesus prayed so fervently for His disciples to be “one?”

18.What are your thoughts about all the women who served important parts in the ministry of Jesus and of the early church?

19.Why do you think understanding some of the history of the church can help us in this study?

20.How are we today, in the church, affected by the past of the Roman Catholic church?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important to know that Paul sees “oneness” as of critical importance among the people of God. This “oneness” is connected to the promise that God made to Abraham. It is important to know that God is faithful and trustworthy. It is important to see that Paul focuses on faith and grace as being crucial in salvation. If we are saved by “grace” are there other things that are necessary for salvation? If so what are they?

Where is God in these words?

God is in these words continually seeking the reconciliation of human beings and creation itself back to Himself. He calls people to come home to Him, to trust Him, to become what He created them to be. God is in the words of Paul in Galatians proclaiming His faithfulness to the promise He made to Abraham and His impartation of grace through Jesus Christ. In what ways do you think God calls us to be a part of His plans for the redemption of His creation?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

As we come to what any of this means for how I live my life we are challenged to see that our salvation comes through grace. If all are saved through grace that means that there is only one path to God. This also means that there are not those who are more saved, better, or are over others because of their being more righteous, or more favored by God. What are some ways that people today act like the Judaizers of Paul’s day, in the church today?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

The word of God is calling us to recognize the importance of “unity,” of “oneness.” Galatians calls us to do more than play lip-service to “oneness.” We are called to reflect “oneness” in all of our relationships with one another. There is much in our world that seeks to divide us from each other, to divide us in the ways we function together, and how we see ourselves as a part of the “one body” of Jesus Christ. The words of Paul, and of Jesus, for us are a call to action: these words call us reflect the nature of God Himself who is described in Scripture as “one.” What are some ways that you think we are each called to promote “oneness” in our world today, and in the church?