

Extract from transcript of 'Women in the church' by Derek Prince.

(This extract starts at 47.09 of the DVD, and ends at 55.03.)

Now, I'm going to enter in to what is a somewhat controversial subject. I'm going to speak about the ministries that are open to women and the ministries that are not open to women, whether single or married. One of the questions that is very much to the fore in the church at the moment is 'should women be ordained?' And my answer is, that's much too vague a question. My answer is ordained to do what? Personally I don't attach too much importance to a religious ceremony of ordination. Jesus said, 'I have chosen you and ordained you, I have set you apart, you are mine.' That's what really matters. I'm not saying there shouldn't be an ordination service but I think it is secondary to God's ordaining. And so, if people say to me, 'should women be ordained?' I say, 'ordained to do what?' To do some things and not to do others. I'm going to go through four lists of ministries in the New Testament and discuss briefly which of them are open to women and which are not, bearing in mind that women are not eligible for governmental authority. There's a bible teacher in Britain named David Pawson, who may be known to some of you, he and I are not close but we're friends, he has published a book which says, 'Leadership is Male' and basically, I think that's true. He's not very popular in some quarters but I think he spoke the truth. I want to suggest to you that when it comes to governmental authority, normally, it is not open to women. Now, let's look at Romans 12 vv 6 - 8. Here's a list of different ministries,

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith, or serving.. or teaching.. or exhorting.. or giving.. or leading.. or showing mercy.."

I think there are altogether seven ministries mentioned. I would say, of those, five are open to women. Prophecy, serving (which is translated as ministry in this translation), exhorting, giving, showing mercy. Two that are not normally open are teaching or leading and when I speak about teaching I mean teaching that is the administration of governmental authority. If you don't get that concept you really can't get clarity. Then in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 5, Paul says,

"But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head."

Lets leave out the question about the head covering for a moment and just point out that it's alright for a woman to pray or prophesy, provided she fulfills the requirements. So those two ministries are open to women - praying and prophesying. And then in 1 Corinthians 12 verses 28-30 Paul gives a whole list of ministries,

"And God has appointed these in the church; first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"

If you analyse that list, here are the ministries which I believe are open to women: prophets, miracles, healings, helps, administrations, tongues and interpretation. That is six. The two which would not normally be open are apostles and teachers. And then in Ephesians 4 v 11, the fourth list, it says,

"He himself (Christ) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and (some) teachers."

There are five ministries there, of them, I would say, prophets and evangelists are open to women.

Apostles, pastors and teachers are not normally open to women because they all involve governmental authority. And then, this is one of the passages that many people find hard to swallow, in 1 Corinthians 14 v 34, Paul says,

"Let women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says."

Now, I've already pointed out in the same chapter, just a few verses higher up, Paul says a woman may pray or prophesy, so he's not saying that women have to sit with their mouths closed all the time. I think the key to understanding this is understanding the word, 'church', which in Greek is 'ekklesia' from which we get the English word, 'ecclesiastic' and so on..

Now, in Greek culture, ekklesia was the word to describe the governmental body of a Greek city state. It is essentially a governmental word. This brings out the fact as I've already said, that God governs humanity in a large measure through His church. But when it comes to what I would call governmental assemblies, women are to keep silent. They are not to usurp the function of governing. That's my understanding. Now, we'll go on just a little further because all these passages I believe are consistent. 1 Timothy chapter 2 v 12, Paul says,

"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence."

and notice – teaching - is directly connected with authority, so Paul says where teaching implies the exercise of authority – government - I don't permit it. Now that's Paul's personal statement but I think we need to give attention to what Paul says - after all if we compare his results with the results of the feminists, he's a long way ahead.