

Christian Women: Second Class Citizens in God's Kingdom?



Does Christianity look down upon women as second-class citizens? That's a fair question due to the fact that some women believe that Christianity has relegated women to being second-class citizens. I would say that's not true, however, there are some religions where women can only be saved because of their husbands, or where a woman's testimony carries only half the value of a man's word in a court of law. But Christianity does not regard women as second-class anything in the kingdom of God. God's Word does say that each of us has a special position to fill in life, but that has nothing to do with being first or second-rate citizens.

The Apostle Paul wrote most of the books of the New Testament, and he's been frequently, and unjustifiably, criticized for promoting a negative attitude towards women. Still, under the Holy Spirit's direction, he wrote to the Christians in Galatia: "**For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**" To use a well-worn question from Luther's Small Catechism ... What does this mean?

Paul was writing at a time when society was divided into classes. He was saying, in the eyes of God, in the love of God, in the redemption of Jesus, there is no difference. Everyone who is baptized into Jesus, everyone who has faith, belongs to the Lord and shares equally in God's grace. The differences between a slave and a free person were gone. The spiritual differences between men and women, if there were any, had been removed.

God looks at us this way. We are, both men and women, sinners. We are, both men and women, rightly to be condemned for our sin. But Jesus entered this world to carry the sins of everybody, both men and women. When He fulfilled the law, He did so for both. When He rose on the third day, the victory that He won was for all humanity, not just for a specific race, or class, or gender. Going beyond the realm of the church, that spiritual truth has had a profound effect upon all of Western society.

The idea that we are all equal before God was a radical, powerful, and uniquely Christian idea. It was welcomed by many, and feared by a few who wanted to hold on to the status quo.

Look at the way Jesus treated women. There is the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus' contemporaries might have avoided her for both her sex, her reputation, and her nationality. Jesus treated her like a person and changed her life. There was the Syrophenician woman whose child was possessed by the devil. She could have been avoided because of her nationality. Jesus healed her daughter and gave her eternal hope. Jesus forgave and changed the lives of so many of the ladies that he met. He never treated any woman as a second-rate citizen.

How about the disciples? How did they handle this issue? Take a close look at the four Gospels. They were written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. How do these Gospels show women? There is Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, God's handmaiden. She's shown as a woman who had found favor with God. There is

the story of the priest, Zacharias. He doubts the announcement conveyed to him by the Lord's angel; his wife doesn't. At Jesus' death and resurrection, how are women shown during those crucial days? When the disciples have run away and are in hiding, it's the women who follow Jesus to the cross. Only John is left at Calvary. But the women, including Jesus' mother, are there. It's the women, not the disciples, who see where Jesus is buried. It's the women, not the disciples, who go to the tomb on resurrection morning. It's the women, not the disciples, to whom the resurrected Jesus first appears. It's the women, not the men who are the first to tell good news that Jesus was alive.

Now, if the Gospel writers had thought women were second-class, don't you think they would have told the story a different way? Don't you think they would have portrayed themselves as the heroes of faith instead of the women? But they told it the way it was, and the ladies look pretty bold back then and they still do now.

Thanks ladies! Without you the Church would suffer!

That's the View from Here.

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