

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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Are Women Permitted to Pray in the Church?

The Pastor's Letter (October 1971)

(Explanatory Note) In the “Pastor’s Letter” of the Wicket Gate for August 1971, reprinted in edition 76 (January 2009) the issue of women covering their heads while engaged in prayer in the church was considered. In a later edition of the Wicket Gate (October) 1971 the wider question of women being permitted to prayer in the church was briefly dealt with and is now printed below.

May we say, then, at the outset, that we believe with all our hearts that women should pray in the prayer meetings of the church as the Lord gives them utterance. This He has done so often throughout the church’s history in the past, and we trust again, by His grace, in the future. We say this, in the first place, for this reason; that we refuse to make a fool out of the mighty apostle Paul.

In the verses referred to, concerning the coverings of the head by women, the apostle Paul is speaking about *how* the women are to pray, having their heads covered. Surely, we cannot suppose for one minute that Paul is only instructing the women *how to pray provided they were allowed to pray!* Are we going to make the great apostle say “Now, let me tell you women, if it were permitted for you to pray when the church comes together, let me inform you that you would have to do it with your heads covered”? Surely this is too much. Surely, Paul is assuming that the women *will* pray in the church and instructing them *how* they should do it - with your heads covered – just as he is also instructing the men how they should pray – with their heads *Uncovered*. If we infer from that passage that Paul is instructing the men *how* to pray, then we must also infer that he is, likewise, instructing the women *how* to pray, and so, assuming that they do and are able to pray.

We believe that this is a valid inference, that Paul does, in fact, assume that women pray in the churches; and we substantiate that inference by reminding ourselves that *nowhere in the New Testament are women forbidden to pray*. Two passages are normally cited by those who would silence the sisters at the prayer meeting: 1st Corinthians chapter 14 verses 34 and 1st Timothy chapter 2 and verse 11. In the Corinthian passage, the words of the apostle Paul are clear: “Let your women keep

silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.” Even a casual glance at that verse will show that it says nothing in the wide world about prayer, and a read through the whole passage, beginning at verse 26 will show that the apostle Paul is dealing with the “orderliness” of church worship, with this overriding concern – “Let all things be done unto edification,” i.e. unto the spiritual benefit of those gathered. He draws a conclusion for us in verse 33: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

Obviously, the women at Corinth were guilty of disturbing the “orderliness” of the church’s meeting, and they were apparently guilty of this through their talking during the meeting. And the next verse – verse 35 – explains very clearly to us what form this “talking” assumed – they were obviously asking their husbands questions as the meeting was in progress. “Let your women keep silence in the churches,” says Paul in verse 34, “and if they will *learn* anything,” he says in verse 35, “let them ask their husbands at home; *for*” he goes on to say, “it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” Not to *pray* in the church, mark you, the passage says absolutely nothing about prayer. It has to do with women *learning*, and the method that the women had apparently adopted in learning at Corinth was to ask their husbands about those things that puzzled them during the meeting together. No, says Paul, let them keep silence, it is not permitted for them to speak – they are disturbing the “orderliness” of the church – and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, it is a shame for women to speak in the church. Nothing to do with prayer.

The second passage is almost identical, in 1st Timothy chapter 2 verse 12. “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” Again, there is not a word about the woman being prohibited the right to pray in the church. The injunction in this case has to do with the woman “teaching” and “usurping authority over the man,” and, of course, we would hold very firmly that a woman may do neither of these things. These are the marks of the Elders of the church and no woman may be an Elder. Therefore, she may not teach the church, nor rule the church – she may not assume the office of Elder. But, there is nothing about prayer.

A glance at the preceding verse – verse 11 – will show that it is the same situation that Paul has dealt with in the Corinthian passage: “Let the

women *learn* in silence with all subjection.” Both passages have to do with *how* the women are to *learn* (a) they are to learn in silence and (b) if they would know anything they are to ask their husbands at home, and not disturb the church’s gathering. There is nothing about prayer.

The passage dealing with women and prayer (1st Cor. 11) deals with *how* women *should* pray – with their heads covered. We therefore assume that it is their privilege in Christ to do so.

Yours,

W. J. Seaton



Men of the Awakening

Daniel Rowlands

In these days of high-powered evangelistic efforts and revival techniques which are calculated to reach the sinner and bring them to Christ, it may come as a bit of a surprise to us to learn that when the great evangelical awakening of the 18th century spread to the Principality of Wales, it did so in the wake of a ministry that consisted in little more than the singing of a psalm, the preaching of a sermon, and the offering of a prayer.

Such a ministry was Daniel Rowlands’ who, for almost fifty years expounded the Word of God – week in, week out – in the little village of Llangeitho in Cardiganshire, at the same time ranging out into the countryside round about with the words of eternal life through Christ his Lord. “When he made his appearance in the pulpit,” an eye-witness informs us, “he frequently gave out ... Psalm 27 verse 4 to be sung. Only one verse was sung before sermon ... then Rowlands would stand up and read his text distinctly in the hearing of all ... Rowlands would go on with his discourse in a calm deliberate manner ... at length his voice became so elevated and authoritative, that it resounded throughout the whole chapel ... There was very little, if any, inference or application at the end of

Rowland's sermon, for he had been applying and enforcing the glorious truths of the gospel throughout the whole of his discourse. He would conclude with a few striking and forcible remarks ... then he would make a very sweet, short prayer, and utter the benediction."

Certainly not the kind of "model" service that we would find in our modern-day evangelistic text books; and yet, it was following the offering of one of those "very sweet, short prayers" that the Holy Spirit of God visited the little church at Llangeitho and rushed in mighty winds throughout the whole of Wales. "By Thine agony and bloody sweat," prayed Daniel Rowlands one morning, "by Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, good Lord deliver us." As the prayer was being offered, both minister and congregation alike were overcome by the presence of the Lord, and soon, the whole of the surrounding countryside was to know these outpourings, as well.

Now, what kind of a man was this "instrument of blessing" in a day when spiritual barrenness had almost entirely enveloped the whole land? Born in 1713, he was ordained to the ministry at the early age of twenty and inducted as Curate to his elder brother who was then Rector of Llangeitho. Like the great majority of the ministers of his day Daniel Rowlands began his ministry with absolutely no idea of the evangelical gospel, or of the standards and demands of a work of God in a person's heart.

After morning service on the Lord's Day he would enter with great gusto into the games and sports that had been organised, often finishing the day in a state of drunkenness. Not long after his ordination, however, he went to hear a minister of evangelical persuasion by the name of Griffith Jones. So irreverent and demonstrative was Daniel Rowlands' behaviour that the latter stopped short in his sermon and offered up a prayer especially on Rowlands' behalf that God would touch his heart and make him a faithful minister of the Gospel. This prayer went home to the young Curate's heart, and from that time onward a complete change came over his life and work until, about the year 1742, we see him as one of the most outstanding preachers of the evangelical awakening. The Countess of Huntingdon, that great and noble "Woman of the Awakening," placed him second only to Whitefield himself, while Bishop Ryle, in his *Five Christian Leaders*, states that "no British preacher of the eighteenth century kept together in one district such enormous congregations of souls for fifty yers." "On sacrament Sundays," we are told, "it was no uncommon thing for him to

have 1500, or 2,000, communicants! The people on these occasions would go together in companies, like the Jews going up to the Temple feast at Jerusalem, and would return home afterwards singing hymns and psalms on their journey ...”

From all over the neighbouring counties the people would come to hear Daniel Rowlands, and out into the neighbouring counties Daniel Rowlands would go in order to be heard. But, as we have said, it was more as a pastor than a pure evangelist that Rowlands did his work, and for those fifty years he preached the word of the Lord to the same people – first of all in the village Church of England building, and then, from the year 1763 until his death in an independently built chapel that was erected for him by some of his old congregation.

This change of circumstance was brought about in a way that had many parallels in those days of revival. Daniel Rowlands, you remember, was simply the “curate” of Llangeitho – his elder brother John being Rector. On the death of his brother (who appears to have left all the preaching and the work of the parish to Daniel) it was supposed that Daniel should then take over as Rector of the church. The Bishop of St. David’s however, a man completely opposed to and out of sympathy with the evangelical party, withheld this, and with a calculated “swipe in the mouth” for the older man, appointed Daniel Rowlands’ own young son as the new Rector of Llangeitho. In characteristic fashion, however, the old man submitted himself to the decision of the Bishop and the office of his young son. But in characteristic fashion also, the Bishop – having now got a taste for the old pastor’s blood – refused to rest until he had seen him finally ejected from the village pulpit. Even good Bishop Ryle, a Church of England stalwart, admits that “A more unhappy, ill-timed, blundering exercise of episcopal power than this, it is literally impossible to conceive.” But very often the Lord gives “episcopally-minded” brethren the scope to blunder in order that His grace and power might be made manifest. And in the non-conformist chapel that was now established in Llangeitho for Daniel Rowlands and some of his old congregation he continued with his weekly ministry for the next twenty-seven years, launching out into the towns and villages round about and witnessing the power of the Lord in awakening men and women to their need of redemption.

How many will eventually rise up and call him blessed, under the Lord, only eternity itself will reveal. Over one hundred ministers alone seem to have traced their conversion to his preaching and teaching; from these,

under his guidance sprang the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, and that land “revived and blossomed as the rose.”

“I am almost leaving you, and am on the point of being taken away,” he told his congregation two weeks before his death at the ripe old age of seventy-seven. “I die as a poor sinner,” he told his children, “depending fully and entirely on the merits of a crucified Saviour ...”

“Alas! Alas! Alas!” he had earlier told an artist who had been set by the Countess of Huntingdon to take his picture, “Alas! Alas! Alas!” taking the picture of a poor old sinner! Alas! Alas!”



Gleanings In the Psalms (Psalm 38)

This psalm is entitled “A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance,” and the thing that is brought most readily to the psalmist’s remembrance during this time of affliction is his past sin. The modern idea is to “forget your past sin seeing as God has forgotten it,” but such a doctrine finds little support from the word of God or in the lives of past saints. The present-day notions of “assurance” allows little room for Godly sorrow for sin in the believer and the child of God is seldom exhorted to remember “the wormwood and the gall.” But how true the words of good John Newton, “I would not give a straw,” he says, “for that assurance which sin will not damp. If David had come from his adultery and had talked of his assurance at that time, I should have despised his speech.” David, indeed, brings to remembrance his “iniquity” and instead of standing brazen-faced before his God he rather falls before Jehovah’s footstool and confesses, “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.”

Verses 2-4. “For thine arrows stick fast in me ...” Let no one think these expressions of penitence overstrained or excessive. If we were as repentant as David, we should bring home to ourselves his language. As it

is, our affections are chilled and we do not enter into his words. And let us observe how all the miseries are referred to their proper end. The sin is not bewailed merely on account of its ill effect of the guilty one, but on account of the despite done to God. The psalmist's first thought is the "anger" of the Lord, and his "hot displeasure." It is not the "arrows" that afflict him so much as the fact that they are God's arrows – "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and **thy** hand presseth me."

The Seven Penitential Psalms

Verses 5-6. "My wounds stink and are corrupt ... I am bowed down greatly ..." The spiritual feeling of **sin** is indispensable to the feeling of **salvation**. A sense of the disease must ever proceed a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal His Son with power, wherever He intends to make the gospel to be "a joyful sound," He makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. A **living** man must needs cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. Spiritual complaint, then, is a mark of spiritual life.

J. C. Philpot

Verse 9. "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee." Secret tears for secret sins are an excellent sign of a holy heart. God well understands the language of half words interrupted with sighs. Such inward sorrow prevents open shame.

Samuel Lee

Verse 13. "But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." God is a witness to all the wrong that is done to us, and in due time will be a witness **for** us, and against those that do us wrong. But, if we undertake to manage and look out for ourselves, we take this work of God out of His hands, and forfeit the benefit of His appearing for us. We shall not lose anything by committing ourselves to him that judges righteously.

Matthew Henry

Verse 17. "For I am ready to halt ..." And then in process of time there came a post to the town and his business this time was with **Mr Ready-to-halt**. "I am come to thee in the name of Him whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches. And my message is to tell thee that He expects thee at His table to sup with Him in His Kingdom the next day

after Easter.” “I am sent for,” said Mr Ready-to-halt to his fellow-pilgrims, “and God shall surely visit you also.”

“He whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches, expects thee at His table the next day after Easter.” Take comfort cripples! Had it been said that the King so expects Greatheart, or Standfast, or Valiant for Truth, that would have been after the manner of the kings of this world. But to insist on having Mr Ready-to-halt beside Him by such and such a day; to send such a post to a pilgrim who has not a single sound bone in all his body; to a sinner without a single trustworthy grace in all his heart; to a poor and simple believer who has nothing in his hand but one of God’s own promises – Who is a King like unto our King?

“Fear not Mephibosheth, for I will surely shew thee kindness, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.” And Mephibosheth shall always be our spokesman when he bows himself and says in return: “What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am.”

Alexander Whyte's "Bunyan Characters"

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

Some years ago in a certain town there lived a little boy whose name was George. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart, and on Sundays would always listen very carefully to what the preacher had to say in church. One Sunday morning there was a Missionary in George’s church and this man told the people about how he hoped to go out to Africa to tell the people there all about the Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of the service the minister told the people that there would be a special collection the following week to help the missionary, and as George sat in his seat he decided right there and then that he would give as much as he could to help that missionary to take the gospel to Africa.

When George got home, he said to his mummy, “Mummy, can I have that Guinea that I got for my birthday and give it to the missionary?”



(A Guinea, boys and girls, was a piece of money that was used some years ago; it was about the size of our 50p piece and worth £1.05p in today’s money.)

His mother was a bit surprised. “Perhaps you will be sorry later on,” she said to George, “would you not like to give just half of it?” But George said, “No; I want to give it all for there are a lot of boys and girls in Africa who need to know the message that Jesus died for our sins.” So his mummy went to her purse and gave George his £1.05p. She gave him a pound note and a shilling piece, but George gave it back to his mother and he said, “Please mummy, can I have my guinea instead?” His mother was surprised, but she put the pound note and the 5p back into her purse and handed George a guinea piece instead. Now I wonder why he did that, boys and girls. Before you read any further, see if you can guess why George wanted his guinea piece instead of a pound note and a shilling.

Now, see if you guessed right! The next Sunday, if you had been in church with George, you would have seen him putting his collection into the collecting plate, and here’s what you would have seen him put in – two old pennies! “What?” you say, “But where was his guinea?” Ah, well, you see, boys and girls, you would have **seen** him put in two pennies, but tucked in between those two pennies – one on the top and one on the bottom – was George’s guinea. George only wanted **God to see** what he was giving to the missionary, not anyone else.

Love, Mrs Seaton

FINDING FAULT WITH HEAVEN

By THOMAS BOSTON

The unconverted would find fault with heaven on several accounts.

- (1) ***That it is a strange country.*** There is a peculiar sweetness in our **native** soil, and men are slow to be drawn from it to live in a strange land. Heaven is the “renewed” man’s native country, for his Father is in heaven. He is “born from above,” therefore he looks upon himself as a stranger on this earth. But the unconverted man is the man of the earth, therefore he “minds earthly things,” and would not be at home away from them.
- (2) ***There is nothing there of what they most delight in.*** If paradise was a place of sensual delights, that religion will be greedily embraced, for that is the kind of heaven men naturally choose. If the covetous man could get bags of gold there, and the voluptuous man could promise himself his sensual delights there, they might be reconciled to heaven, and be meet for it too. But since it is not so, though they may utter fair words about it, truly it has little place in their hearts.
- (3) ***Every corner of it is filled with that which they like least.*** Holiness fills every corner of heaven. It is true there is joy in heaven, but it is holy joy; there are pleasures; there are places to stand on in heaven, but it is holy ground. And that holiness that appears in every place and in everything in heaven would mar everything and everyplace for the unconverted.
- (4) ***They would hate their new company if they were taken there.*** Truly, they who care not for communion with God here and now, nor value the fellowship of His people, at least in the vitals of practical Godliness, would never like the company of heaven. Many, indeed, mix themselves with the Lord’s people on earth, to procure a Christian name for themselves, but such a thing they could not endure for all eternity.
- (5) ***They would never like the employment of heaven.*** To be taken up in beholding, admiring, and praising Him that sitteth on the Throne, which is the business of the saints there, would be an

intolerable burden to them, seeing it is not agreeable to their natures, and seeing as they care so little for it now on earth.

- (6) *They would find fault that it is of everlasting continuance.* If the Sabbath day is a burden to them, how could they brook the celebrating of an everlasting Sabbath in the heavens!

The Saints and the Saviour.

Although we must always expect the best from men, especially from the believers, we remember that they may err and go astray. I need to be warned against such a practice. I must say: I shall gladly believe that men such as Gregory, Ambrose and Augustine were holy men; but I do not trust myself to them. For their holiness does not make them infallible, and it does not imply that one must rely and depend on all the dicta of the fathers or approve and believe all their teachings.

Rather take the touchstone of God's Word into your hands. Let this be your criterion for testing, trying and judging all that the fathers have preached, written and said, as well as the precepts and human ordinances that have been promulgated. Otherwise one will be easily misled and deceived.

Therefore I say: I want to see whether any doctrine concurs with Christ. I dare not forget the clear rule which St. Paul gives us Christians: to pay attention to what conforms to the doctrine of Christ, and to the faith. In Romans 12:7 he says, "Let it be in conformity with the faith;" that is, it must be in harmony and conformity with Christ. And St. Peter declares: "Whoever speaks, let him speak as the word of God." You must not go only to St. Bernard and St. Ambrose, but it is imperative that you **take them with you to Christ** and see whether they agree with His Teaching.

If they do not, but have added something to that which Christ has taught, or have evolved something from their own piety and taught this, I shall let them answer for that. But I must not convert it into an article of faith; nor am I to believe it since they do not entirely agree with Christ. For I am to adhere to Christ alone. He has taught neither too much nor too little. He has taught me to know God the Father, has revealed Himself to me, and

has also acquainted me with the Holy Spirit. He has also instructed me how to live and how to die, and has told me what to hope for. What more do I want? And if anyone wishes to teach me anything new, I must say to him: "I will not believe it, dear pastor, dear preacher, dear St. Ambrose, dear St. Augustine." For anything that goes beyond and above the Man who is called Christ, is not genuine. It is still flesh and blood, and Christ warned us against relying on that. That one Man, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, must have greater weight with me than all the holiest people on earth put together.

Martin Luther

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