

The Christian Woman

(Philippians 4:1-3)

THE history of the church could well be written around the lives and actions of godly women who helped carry the banner of Christ wherever they were. All too often the Christian woman has received a slap where she needed encouragement because our emphasis has often been on what the woman could not do, instead of what she could and should do. When you launch a study on God's woman, there are some difficult passages that demand attention. It is often hard to decide what was meant to be a principle for all time and what related to a given time and situation. It seems that the best way to begin such a study is to look at examples of what the Christian women did in the New Testament and were commended for. Since God does not change or contradict Himself, passages on restrictions cannot condemn what was done and accepted. So let us look at examples of "women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel."

I. IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST (Matthew 27:55, 56)

Mary, Jesus' mother, played an active role in His ministry. She encouraged His first miracle (John 2). She stayed with Him even to His death (John 19:25-27) and was among the 120 waiting in Jerusalem for power from on high when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:14).

Mary and Martha of Bethany also played a big part in His ministry (Luke 10:38-42), for Jesus often went to their home. He healed Lazarus (John 11). We read of how Mary anointed His

feet with precious ointment (Mark 14) before His death.

Some women, including Mary Magdalene, contributed to His support (Luke 8:1-3). It was to this same Mary Magdalene that Jesus appeared after His resurrection (Matthew 28:9, 10; John 20:11-18). A group of them had come to anoint Him after His burial. Something shines through in all this. Women were then, as now, very active parts in the whole plan of God and the fulfillment of Christ's mission.

II. IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Dorcas was a woman from Joppa (Acts 9:36-43). She was "abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did" (Acts 9:36). A part of that ministry involved making garments for people (Acts 9:39).

There was also Priscilla, along with her husband, Aquila (Acts 18:1-3). They traveled with Paul for a time (Acts 18:18). They took Apollos, the erring preacher, aside to better instruct him (Acts 18:23-28). They also had church meetings in their home (Romans 16:3-5).

Then there were Philip's four virgin daughters (Acts 21:8, 9). They were *prophetesses*.

III. IN THE LETTERS (Galatians 3:28)

Phoebe was a servant of the church (Romans 16:1, 2) and helped many, among whom was Paul. The word for *servant* here is the same as the word *deacon* in the feminine gender (1 Timothy 3:11).

Euodia and Syntyche shared in Paul's struggles in the cause of the gospel. They were workers.

CONCLUSION

These are examples of godly women at work in

the kingdom. It does not mean that what they did is all that Christian women can do in the church. It does mean that what they did is right for then and now. They were examples to women of all time.

—Leon Barnes

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