

A BOOK REPORT

"HEARING HER VOICE/A BIBLICAL INVITATION FOR WOMEN TO PREACH"

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TITLE OF BOOK: "Hearing Her Voice/A Biblical Invitation for Women to Preach", Revised Edition

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INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

As your Reviewer, in fairness to the Reader, I feel compelled to disclose any bias with which I approach any Book Report. I, therefore, disclose, up front, that my personal bias leans heavily towards a conclusion that those women and men who are fully qualified by divine gifting and calling, and appropriate training and experience to occupy and perform the roles in any position of Christian Ministry, should not only be allowed to occupy those positions and perform those roles, but should be encouraged to do so. I am persuaded that the denial to women of various roles in Christian Ministry, simply because they are women and not men, females and not males, is not Biblically appropriate, and is counter productive to, and in fact damaging to the advancement of the Gospel of Christ.

With my bias having been disclosed to the Reader, I find myself a bit disappointed in this Book, not because I disagree with the Author's conclusion that appropriately gifted and qualified women should be allowed to preach most of the sermons which are delivered in Christian Churches (a conclusion with which I certainly agree), but because the Author further concludes that there are roles which women should not be allowed to occupy (primarily the role of Senior Pastor) and that there are Sermons of a certain type (those which the Author would find to be the type of "Teaching" barred to women in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, primarily in 1 Timothy, and particularly 1 Timoth 2:12) which women should not be allowed to deliver in a Christian church. As stated above, I am fully persuaded that the Author's conclusions do not go far enough, and that there are no roles in Christian Ministry which should be denied to women solely because they are women. However, I am humbly open to hearing and considering reasonable, well- founded arguments from the Reader that I am wrong.

All of this said, however, the Author makes an extremely sound, highly persuasive argument for the position that, while a woman should not be allowed to occupy the position of Senior Pastor, or to deliver a Sermon which is of the type the Apostle Paul would have found to be "Teaching", a role which Paul would have barred to women by his statements in 1 Timothy, particularly 1 Timoth 2:12. In the Author's view, neither 1 Timothy 2:12 nor any other Biblical passage or section prohibits women from preaching from the pulpit the type of contemporary sermon which is usually preached in Christian congregations, such sermons being more the delivery of "prophecy" or the asserting of "exhortations", roles which Paul would clearly have allowed women to fill.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-13 Paul states that:

3) Third, the Author notes that we have tended to “equate modern sermons with teaching”, but that there are no legitimate grounds for doing so as most modern sermons would be more clearly equated with *exhorting than with teaching*, as “ancient teaching” would have been considered by Paul. The Author argues that “If Sermons were exclusively ‘teaching’ he would have no problem excluding women from the pulpit”, but that most Sermons are not ancient “teaching” of the type spoken of by Paul.

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does not have in mind the general idea of “transmitting truth”, but rather has in mind a more technical idea of “transmitting, intact the new covenant words of the apostles”, sometimes referred to as “the Apostolic Deposit”. To Paul “teaching” meant the transmitting, intact, the Apostolic Deposit words intact. Furthermore, when Paul spoke of “authority” in 1 Timothy 2:12 he could not have meant any and all kinds of “authority” since that would contradict what he says elsewhere. So, when he married “teaching” and “authority” together, he had to mean an “authority to teach”, a more obvious reading of 1 Timothy 2:12.

5) Fifth, the Author notes that when Paul and other Epistle writers wrote their Epistles, the New Testament did not exist. The Gospels were written after Paul’s letters. There was then no written record of the teachings of Christ or of the Apostles, the so called “apostolic deposit”. Such “apostolic deposit” could only be transmitted to the various Christians and their Congregations, orally. There was no written record against which to check any purported teaching of the Apostolic Deposit, the teaching and words of the Apostles with respect to Jesus and His teachings. Therefore, in the Author’s view: “Historical and exegetical considerations will make clear that teaching for Paul means *preserving and laying down the fixed traditions of and about Jesus as handed down by the apostles*. Teaching is not explaining the Bible text, nor is it applying God’s truth to congregational life (though it can involve both of these things); **it is making sure that the apostolic words and rulings are well known and regularly rehearsed in church.**” (emphasis added) The Author notes that the various congregations, such as the Corinthians, would have received, orally, a huge body of teaching from the apostles about Jesus and His teachings and the new covenant before they ever received Paul’s letters. For example, Paul spent 18 months with and teaching the Corinthians, long before he wrote his letters to them. So, the apostolic teachings about Jesus were transmitted, not by written documents but by oral tradition, through the memorizing and rehearsing of the fixed body of information the apostles had laid down for the churches. Paul, as a Pharisee, was schooled in, and accustomed to their practice of receiving and transmitting traditions, orally. While Paul was caused by his personal encounter with Jesus to abandon most of the Pharisaic traditions of the fathers, which Jesus (and Paul due to his encounter with Jesus) held to be heretical and contrary to God’s Truth, he, Paul, didn’t forsake the idea of oral tradition. Rather he embraced a new oral tradition consisting of the stories and teachings of Jesus and the insights which the apostles themselves added. While Paul was the prime teacher in his circle, he quickly appointed others (e.g. Timothy and Titus) for the task, and he instructed them in the apostolic deposit, the apostolic traditions.

6) Sixth, our Author concludes that “teachers”, in Paul’s view, were those who would act as a congregation’s repository of the oral traditions of the apostolic deposit. So “teaching” in 1 Timothy 2:12 refers to *preserving and laying down of the body of oral traditions first handed down from the apostles*. “Teaching” does not refer to the exposition of a Biblical passage, or exhortation to follow the teachings of a Biblical passage. One can read, seek to explain and exhort others to follow the teachings of a Biblical passage, without engaging in “teaching” as referred to by Paul in 1 Timothy

2:12 since “teaching”, as referred to in that passage, means the laying down of the fixed traditions first delivered by the apostles. It was the laying down of the entrusted words of the apostles. The author contends that nothing in Paul’s usage of the word teaching means explaining or applying Scripture.

7) Seventh, our Author finds that, while some contemporary sermons might involve something close to the laying down of the apostolic deposit, this is not the function of most sermons which are, rather, the authoritative explanation of, and exhortation to follow God’s Will as it is already set forth in the apostolic deposit that is now preserved, in writing, in the New Testament, against which any preaching can be checked.

8) Eighth: So, clearly, in the Author’s view, women are not Biblically prohibited from delivering, from the pulpit, almost all contemporary types of Sermons; although they are prohibited from delivering a Sermon which would constitute a “laying down of the oral traditions of the apostolic deposit”. Candidly, at least for your Reviewer it is difficult to conclude that any Sermon of today could, in view of the written record of the Apostolic Deposit which is provided by the New Testament, be a Sermon of the type which the Author concludes cannot be delivered by a woman under Paul’s admonitions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As noted at the outset of this Review, your Reviewer does not share our Author’s conclusions that there are certain types of Sermons which a woman cannot deliver from the pulpit, or that there are certain roles or positions in Christian ministry, primarily the role of Senior Pastor, which a woman is Biblically prohibited from occupying. One might ask the Author whether it is his view that a Senior Pastor is somehow the conveyer or transmitter or protector of the Apostolic Deposit, and that a woman cannot be a conveyer, transmitter, preserver or protector of the Apostolic Deposit even though she might well be as schooled, trained and qualified in all matters of the Apostolic Deposit, and fully as capable of understanding, protecting, defending and preserving such Apostolic Deposit in any role of ministry, as is any man.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

While this book is short, and easy to read and understand, if one does not want to read it in its entirety, one can get a satisfactory understanding of its contents by reading the Introduction, and the Conclusion, in which the Author outlines his arguments, and responds to some counter arguments.

