

## INTRO

Do you know the potential embedded in the phrases like, ‘the Holy Spirit is here’ or ‘we are filled with the Holy Spirit’? It’s another of those phrases we use as Christians that roll off the tongue, but the potential of that, the power of God within us, working through us and surrounding us; the power of God at work in us so that we are no longer restrained by the way we used to do things and no longer restrained by the way the world does things; that the systems and patterns of our culture are being overturned in our lives by the ways and the means of God. Do you know that the things we see in the Scripture, God has given us the resources to accomplish by His Spirit? Do you know that?

Do you know that you are not a miserable sinner? I hope so. Because a lot of Christian teaching has been “you are a miserable sinner, hold on and one day you will get to heaven.” But the power of the Holy Spirit has transferred you from darkness into the kingdom of His light. That term, “light” does not mean ‘enabling you to see’ but light is energy. You have been transferred from darkness where you cannot see and where there is no energy into the kingdom of His light where you can see and where there is energy to perform the things He has asked you to perform. You have been made a saint with the power to live in God’s kingdom.

So when we say “the Holy Spirit is here,” or “we are filled with the Holy Spirit,” we mean more than just, “this feels good” or “I did something good today,” we mean that God sent His Son to show us how to live in God’s kingdom on the cross removed the barriers that separate us from our God and by His resurrection gave us a new life whereby you can be filled by the Spirit to become the kind of person that Jesus is.

Do you know that Jesus teaching is not impossible? Its impossible by ourselves. Its impossible to do the things that Jesus did and follow things he asked us to do. Impossible by ourselves that’s the whole point of the Old Testament. Jesus comes and fills us with his Spirit and we become the kind of people who want to do and will do the things Jesus commanded. Humans are bad at trying to do things. We set up lists and try to accomplish things and we inevitably fail. But if we become the kind of people who do the things that Jesus taught in partnership with God and full of His power, then watch out what happens. That’s when the church begins to transform the world.

Last week we saw Paul in Athens and Corinth, preaching the good news of Jesus, and facing rejection from both pagan and religious folks. However, in both towns, some people DID believe his message, and the seeds of the gospel took root. Today, we’re going to begin and end with Paul, but there are some interesting people in the middle that we are going to meet, and whom we should take notice of.

***Acts 18:18 Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him. 19 They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind.***

Corinth was the town where Paul was hauled to court. He was there for at least 18 months, and established a church there. The letters 1 & 2 Corinthians were later written by Paul to this church. But eventually he leaves to set sail on another missionary journey. Now, did you notice the names of the people who went with Paul? Priscilla and Aquila? Who are they? They are friends of Paul, and he actually met them when he first arrived in Corinth after his debate with the Athenians.

***Acts 18:1 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome. 3 Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was.***

This couple were tent-makers, which was a trade Paul knew and used to support himself. They worked together and eventually become vital partners with Paul who would go on to have a major impact on the church. We don’t know if they were already following Jesus when they met Paul, or if they became believers as a result of hanging around him every day. Either way, it can be safely assumed that they would have learned lots from Paul about the Scriptures and what they revealed about Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

We also know they were devoted to the mission of spreading the gospel, because when Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, they went with him. Paul continued on his journey, travelling to Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, and Phrygia.

In the meantime, he left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus to help the believers there and to share the gospel. And then, as Paul leaves Ephesus, an important person turns up.

***Act 18:24 Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. 25 He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John's baptism. 26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.***

Apollos arrives in town, and this is a guy who can speak really well. Not only that, he knows the Scripture, and he's been taught the way of the Lord. So he comes into the picture and he begins to preach enthusiastically about Jesus. The word for 'enthusiastic' here is "Zeo", which means "boiling" or "hot". This guy is on fire, and I think this is more than mere enthusiasm. He is preaching under the power of the Spirit. Not only that, but the message about Jesus he is preaching is *accurate*. He's preaching to the Jews in the synagogue, and it's there that Priscilla and Aquila hear him. So, they're in the synagogue, and they hear Apollos preach. But something strikes them – he's speaking the truth, but not *the whole truth*. Verse 25 tells us that Apollos only knows about John's baptism. What does that mean?

Before we dig in, it's important here to understand one thing – when we talk about baptism here, we are not just talking about methods of dunking people under water, nor are we talking about what words we use when we dunk people under water. We're talking about the purpose and intention of baptism. "John's Baptism" refers to John the Baptist. Do you remember him? Hanging out in the wilderness, hairy shirt, eats bugs and honey for his dinner – that guy. But more importantly, he quoted Isaiah to describe himself – "I am the voice crying out in the wilderness – 'prepare the way for the Lord's coming'". John told people to be baptised as a sign of repentance of their sin. John's baptism was to *prepare for the coming of Jesus*. But after Jesus began his ministry, John's ministry faded away. People were no longer waiting and preparing for a Messiah anymore – the Messiah had come. Jesus came and accomplished all that we needed to enter into relationship with God. John's baptism encouraged people to get rid of their old life without a clear idea of what was next. But after Jesus had resurrected, baptism was about entering into a new life in Jesus, and a new community – the church! It was not just about getting rid of sin, but about being transformed and living life in the fullness of God's Kingdom.

There's another element of baptism after Jesus' triumphant work that is important – that is, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. All through Acts, we have seen the Apostles telling people to repent and be baptised in water, but then to be baptised and filled with the Spirit – to receive the empowering of the Spirit to live the life in Jesus that they had now been called to. If John's baptism was about taking something away, taking our sin away, the new baptism after Jesus in both water and Spirit was about receiving something new. Apollos knew about 'John's Baptism', about taking something away, but didn't have the knowledge about what was given in its place.

So Apollos appears to have been taught well about Jesus – who He was, what He proclaimed, and what He did; but his picture is incomplete: he knows about Jesus dealing with sin, but he's not fully clued in on the new life that Jesus brings. He needs to learn of this new baptism into the church, its ministry, and the gift of the Holy Spirit's power for all believers. It's probable that Apollos had been taught and firmly believed in Jesus without being aware of the community that Jesus was working through by His Spirit.

BTW, I still think that Apollos had received the power of the Spirit. This was evident in the way he preached, as v25 says, "with a boiling Spirit." His heart has been transformed and He is alive with Holy Spirit power. I just don't think he knew how to articulate it yet. He didn't have the words or the knowledge to describe it and teach it to others. If you don't think this is possible, then I assure you it is!

I knew a guy in the USA whose was a drug addict, suicide attempts, and he felt like there was nowhere else to go for him. Someone invited him to church and he ended up believing in Jesus. Not long after that he managed to get a job and into an apartment. He was getting his life set back up and he came to church one day troubled. He said 'I don't know what happened to me but the other day I was walking to work, singing one of the praise songs we sing on a Sunday morning. All of a sudden I felt like my body was on fire and I started singing in this crazy language. Did the devil get a hold of me?' They said, "No, that's the Holy Spirit." He had been filled with the spirit but he didn't have the words to articulate it but he had the power within him.

With another guy, one Sunday morning we were inviting people to come forward to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and our Pastor was saying “you know things happen to people, they feel a power within them and some people begin to speak in tongues.” After the service he came up and said “that happened to me during worship 6 weeks ago but I just didn’t know what was happening.” So, its possible for people to experience what we spoke just without having the words to describe it.

Priscilla and Aquila hear his amazing teaching, recognise the areas he’s doesn’t have knowledge in, and v25 says they take him aside to fill in his gaps. “*Take him aside*” most likely means that they invited him to their home where they “*explained the way of God more accurately.*” It wasn’t that Apollos was wrong in his teaching, and they weren’t correcting what he had said. But they were giving him the full story so he could be more effective.

Now, I want you to notice something if you can.

***Acts 18:2 There (Paul) became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla.***

Who does Paul meet? What’s the order? He meets Aquila and Priscilla. This is Paul’s, and our, introduction to the pair, and it’s proper and right in the custom of that time that Paul would first have a friendship with the husband first and then the wife. Consequently, Aquila is named first. We still do this now when introducing couples.

But watch what happens in v18 when Paul leaves Corinth for Ephesus:

***Acts 18:18 (b) Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.***

The order has reversed. Priscilla first, then Aquila. Maybe Luke made a mistake when he did this. Surely, he’ll get it right next time.

***Acts 18:26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.***

Nope. Luke does it again!

Well, maybe this is just a quirk of Luke. Surely other biblical writers like... well, like Paul himself wouldn’t make the same mistake?

***Romans 16:3 Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus.***

In the last letter that he wrote to Timothy before he died, Paul’s closing words are his thoughts of his friends, and even there we see the same emphasis:

***2 Timothy 4:19 Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and those living in the household of Onesiphorus.***

It was highly unusual for this time and culture to name the wife in the place of honour before the husband. The reason Luke does this is because Priscilla is the ministry leader between the two. In particular, when they taught Apollos, it appears Priscilla took the lead.

Why is this important for us? It’s important because there are many areas of the church today where women are excluded from leadership and teaching roles based on a skewed reading of the Scriptures. It’s important for men and women to acknowledge and see that all the roles of the church are open equally to men and women. I say this today as a challenge to my brothers and as an encouragement to my sisters.

God’s promise on the day of Pentecost was, ***Acts 2:18 “In those days I will pour out my Spirit, even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy.”*** When the Spirit of God is poured out on the church, women and men are set free and empowered to fulfil the calling God has for them.

It’s tragic that the church that was born on the day of Pentecost with these words, has many times diminished the role of the Holy Spirit, imposed their own man-made order, and told women that they have lesser roles to play than men.

Our culture is undergoing a thing at the moment through movements about listening to women and hearing what they have to say, considering their place and their opinions. How tragic that the church is behind, when this power of the Holy Spirit that we were talking about earlier has been placed in us to overcome the evil structures of this world and to do things God’s way, his kingdom way.

The resurrection of Jesus is the moment in history where God's coming Kingdom begins to reverse death, sin, and its effects. This is what Jesus came to do. God is undoing the power of sin, evil structures, and broken relationships is doing a new thing. The church is one of the primary avenues through which He is demonstrating this, a prayerful community of love where both women and men are empowered by the Spirit to minister and use their giftings to bless others. Paul teaches the church in **Galatians 3:28** that, "***There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.***" This doesn't mean that God has done away with gender differences. God still affirms the beauty of His creation of male and female. But it does mean that in Christ Jesus, the way humans have used gender differences to determine someone's worth, has been done away with.

Rich Nathan says, "*The gifts of God and the call of God are not gender-based any more than they are race-based or age-based.*"

But still, in many church's, and in the minds of many Christians, women are to take a back seat while men do the leading and teaching. Much of the confusion over this stems from some of Paul's letters, and we'll look at the most misunderstood one in a second, but before we do, I think it would help us to gain some wider context first. I want us to consider 3 things:

**1. The references throughout the New Testament to women ministers co-labouring with men and leading in their own right.**

- Jesus had multiple women in his close circle who were active in His ministry.
- It was women who stayed with Jesus at the cross, who went to His burial, who first discovered the empty tomb, and were the first witnesses to share His resurrection.
- Lydia led a house church.
- The four daughters of Philip the Evangelist were well-respected for their prophetic giftings.
- Priscilla taught the gospel, and led house churches in Ephesus and Rome.
- Phoebe led the church in Cenchrea and was entrusted by Paul to deliver and explain his letter to the Romans. This is the most dense letter in the New Testament. Paul trusted Phoebe to deliver this letter. Who will need to explain this letter if there was any confusion? Phoebe, who was trained by Paul.
- Junia, a relative of Paul, was an Apostle held in high regard by all the churches.

**2. Paul's commendations of women ministers throughout his letters.**

- In fact, Paul spends a whole chapter of his letter to the Romans greeting his co-labourers in the gospel. A third of those he mentions are women.

**3. The context into which Paul was writing.**

At this point, I want to look at a scripture that has been used to justify the exclusion of women from church leadership and teaching roles. It's from 1 Timothy. Let's read it first:

***1 Timothy 2:11 Women should learn quietly and submissively. 12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. 13 For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.***

If you attended our How To Read The Bible class earlier this year, you will have learned about reading the Scriptures in context. You can't rip out a section of scripture and make doctrine out of it. On first glance, it would be easy to read this passage and say, "Aha, women aren't allowed to teach men, or lead men!" But, if you are aware of the wider context and of Paul's other writings, alarm bells should go off. It can't be that Paul is issuing a *universal* restriction on women teaching or leading because in other places he champions women leaders and teachers. So, we need to look closely not just at *what* Paul has written, but *WHY* Paul was writing this to get a clear and consistent picture with the rest of his teachings.

This letter was written to Timothy, a young pastor in Ephesus who was leading a church with real problems. In both his letters to Timothy, Paul is helping him to deal with false teaching that's spreading throughout the Ephesian church. The false teaching is spreading throughout the church by wildfire, and it's being spread primarily by women who have been deceived.

The heresy was based on the central premise of a re-writing of the creation story, where Eve was created before Adam, and was therefore superior to men. The teaching went on to say that women could assert their God-given superiority over men by abstaining from marriage, childbirth, and certain foods. By doing so, they could usurp the authority of men in their lives and return to the state of perfection Eve enjoyed before the fall, where she ruled over Adam. Many women hadn't had access to education (particularly theological education), and so they were being misled by this teaching, and spreading it amongst others. They were going from house to house within the church and so, The gospel message of Jesus and what His Kingdom had come to accomplish in both men and woman was being obscured.

So Paul says:

***1 Timothy 2:11 Women should learn quietly and submissively.***

2 things.

1. Women should learn. This in itself was a revolutionary idea at the time – that women should learn, and that they should learn the truth about God, because before this they were separated and weren't allowed to.
2. They should learn quietly and submissively. To whom or what are they to submit? Paul doesn't say. The common teaching has been that they are to submit to men. I would posit that what Paul is really saying is that they should submit to the truth of Jesus Christ. So women should learn and submit to the truth, not this false teaching that's going on.

***1 Timothy 2:12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.***

New Testament scholar Philip Payne has much to say that clears this verse up. The word translated as “do not let”, whenever it is used in the NT, is referring to a particular situation and is not universal. The word which is translated here as “have authority” is found 1 time in the New Testament. However, everywhere it is used outside the NT, it means “self-assumed authority” – that is, authority that I take for myself. So, a better translation would be,

***1 Timothy 2:12 “In this instance, I am not permitting a woman to teach with self-assumed authority over men. She needs to be quiet and pay attention.”***

Paul wants the women in the church to stop spreading this heresy, and to stop using it to try to gain influence and authority for themselves. Instead, they need to stop talking and learn the truth so they can properly live out their faith. Paul then goes on to correct some of the details of the heresy about Eve being created first and being superior over Adam:

***1 Timothy 2:13 For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result.***

The stereotypical things we use to joke are not funny anymore. You know the Ephesians passage about mutual submission between husbands and wives, where it says explicitly wives submit to your husbands and then it has a whole paragraph of how men are supposed to submit in service to their wives? See if you are in an disagreement and you say to your wife, “the bible says you are to submit to me, haha” - that's not funny anymore. Even, “oh it was Eve who took the fruit off the tree, women are to blame” – it's not funny anymore.

Adam was also deceived and he also had a choice. In the biblical account the order does start with Eve but Adam was also implicit in the whole thing.

The biblical account tells us that Eve was first deceived by Satan and ate the fruit. She then spread this to Adam. Similarly, women in the Ephesian church community were being deceived, and were then spreading it to the rest of the church. This is NOT saying that the fall was all the fault of the woman, or that women are more gullible than men. Adam may have gotten the fruit from Eve, but he was responsible for his actions. In fact, in his second letter to Timothy, Paul says that men and women are both prone to deception:

***2 Timothy 3:13 But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived.***

'People,' both male and female. If you think that, by saying Adam was born first, Paul is saying that *men* are superior, think again. In his letter to the Corinthians, he says:

***1 Corinthians 11:11 But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. 12 For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God.***

In fact, this is important for the closing verse of this passage. If every man other than Adam has been born of Eve, who do you think eventually came through Eve's line? Jesus.

***1 Timothy 3:15 But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.***

The heresy was teaching that childbearing was a result of the curse of the Fall and that Before the Fall, Eve was perfect because she never had children. They were teaching if you want to remain pure, women should avoid marriage and having children. This was leading to divorce and abortion. On the contrary, Paul says, childbearing was the avenue through which God redeemed not only Eve, but all people, men and women, through the birth of Jesus. It was through the gift of childbearing that women had been given that Jesus came into the world to save us. This isn't saying that women must have children in order to be saved. This would betray everything that Paul has written about salvation. He is talking about Jesus.

This passage is not a universal ban on women preaching and teaching. It's a specific command to a particular church at a particular time over a particular issue.

It may be useful in our culture in our time for men to not preach. For instance, if we had a support group for women who had suffered abuse by men, I would say it would be smart to have a restriction on men teaching them. Particularly if these men were coming from a position of heresy where they believed men were superior to women and women should know their place. It's not about women not being allowed to preach and teach. It was Paul trying to stop something that would destroy this church.

At Falkirk Vineyard, we believe that all roles are open to men and women based on spiritual gifting and Godly character. Women and men are different, and their gifting may be expressed differently as a result. But we believe in the Biblical truth that life in the Kingdom of God, and participation within God's church family is available to all who come by faith in Jesus. It is His transforming power at work in us which frees us from sin and qualifies us to serve one another. This is why, in all areas of leadership in our church, in the Scottish Vineyard Region, and in the National Vineyard movement, you will find women in positions of leadership, authority, and responsibility.

Women, you are not liberated by cultural feminist philosophy. You are not free to be who you are because somehow humankind has fumbled its way to a more free and progressive society. You are liberated by your saviour Jesus Christ. You are free to pursue your calling because of what He did. Anything in our culture that resembles that equality between men and women is just catching up. Jesus is the smartest man who ever lived. He figured all this out and he

taught it to us. If you have ever been maligned or mistreated or put down or spoken badly about by men, even the men close to you, then I'm sorry. I've been on the other side of this teaching! So, women if you ever experience that I want you to say as much as is humanly possible, and by the help of the Holy Spirit, this church is a place where you can thrive and grow in the callings that God has put on you.

Men, you are not an idiot, you are not a numbskull, you are not an unfeeling emotionless neanderthal. You don't have to be 20 years younger than you really are. You don't have to live in the immaturity that our culture has presented to you as masculinity. You can be a responsible leader of your life, of your home and in the church without trampling all over women or other people. This is not some radical liberal feminist tract, because the call is to men and women. *"I will pour out my spirit on that day to men and women, and they shall prophecy, and they shall build one another up."*

We read from Ephesians 5 last week. 'To encourage one another and teach one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.' Men if you are feeling beaten into thinking, "I don't know what to do, I don't know how to act now, in our culture I don't know what to be," you can know how to act, and know how to be, through Jesus Christ. I keep saying that Jesus is the smartest man, the strongest man, the most masculine man that ever lived in God's original design for men. Jesus isn't soft but neither is he a brute. He lives with strength and compassion and with love. He has hard talks with men and with women and he lifts them both up.

We would really love Falkirk Vineyard to be a place that is an example. One of the primary ways I believe that the kingdom of God will be revealed to a watching world is through the way that men and women abandon and forsake and put death the stereotypical insults and back and forth and bitterness and antagonism between the genders, and instead live in a way that we encourage and build each other up.