

“Philip’s Daughters”
Acts 21:8-9
(Preached at Trinity, January 23, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this section of the Book of Acts Luke has determined to give us a historical account of Paul’s journey from Miletus to Jerusalem. As we saw in **Chapter 20** Paul left Miletus and went to Ephesus where he addressed the elders. After teaching and encouraging he left them with much sorrow.
Acts 20:36-37 – “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him,”
2. Leaving Ephesus Paul resumes sets his sights once again upon Jerusalem. Paul felt a driving compulsion to go to Jerusalem. He felt he was under a Divine mandate. He had a single minded passion that would not be sidetracked.
 - A. Paul was continually warned by the brethren not to go.
Acts 21:4 – “And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”
But Paul would not be swayed.
 - B. In **Verses 10-11** he received a cryptic message from a prophet by the name of Agabus. Agabus took Paul’s belt and bound his hands and feet and then said, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.”
 - C. Again, the brethren begged him not to go.
Acts 21:12 – “And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.””
 - D. Paul’s answer was resolute
Acts 21:13 – “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”
 1. Paul’s courage and determination was strong – he was willing to forfeit everything for the sake of Christ.
 2. It should make each of us ask ourselves, do we have the courage of the martyrs? Are we willing to go to any end for the sake of Christ?
3. Tonight I want to return to this text to deal with a matter of controversy. There are many times as I go through a text I’m tempted to pass over certain texts. They are usually texts that are nonessential to the meaning of the passage. But, in order to preach faithfully line upon line I want to be as thorough as I can.

4. Look with me at **Verses 8-9**
Acts 21:8-9 – “And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him. ⁹ And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.”
6. These verses deal with an issue of controversy in the Church of Christ. What is the place of women in the life and work of the church?
7. In **Verse 8** we find Paul entering into the home of Philip the Evangelist.
- A. We already know much about Philip.
1. He was one of the seven deacons ordained in **Acts 6**
 According to the qualifications in **Acts 6** he was a man of “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom”
 2. When the persecution began in Jerusalem all but the Apostles fled for their lives but they did what Christians do – they spread the message of the Gospel as they went.
Acts 8:4 – “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”
 The word for preaching isn't the word we use to describe preaching in an official sense but **εὐαγγελίζω** - to bring good news, to announce glad tidings
 3. Philip was called to a new office – the office of Evangelist. Evangelists were probably those set apart by the apostles to plant and strengthen churches. This is one of the 4 offices Paul described in **Ephesians 4**
Ephesians 4:11 – “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”
 4. Philip went into Samaria where he preached in the official sense.
Acts 8:5 – “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.”
κηρύσσω - to be a herald, to officiate as a herald, always with the suggestion of formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed
8. In **Verse 9** we find something else about this man. He had four daughters, each having the gift of prophesy.
Acts 21:9 – “And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.”
9. This raises some interesting and important issues. Did they hold the office of prophet? Did they stand in the church and speak God's truths to the congregation? And how are we to understand prophesy for today?
10. Why raise the issue? Because this verse often raises questions. It is sometimes used as a proof text to support women preachers.
- A. There are some things God has not allowed us to know, things He has not revealed while we are on earth. We call these things mysteries. There are other things, however, that He has revealed. These things are for us to know.
Deuteronomy 29:29 – “The secret *things* belong unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are* revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.”

- B. Truth is not a relative term. Truth is absolute. In other words, there can be only one truth. As God's people we should be students of this Book that we might be able to come to a knowledge of the truth.
John 8:31-32 – “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; ³² And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
- C. Sometimes it takes careful detective work – digging deep into the text. And it demands following all of the rules of hermeneutics.
11. We don't have a great wealth of information from this verse – only that they were Philip's daughters, they were virgins, and they were able to prophesy. What we do not find here is an example of the Bible setting aside the principle of distinction between men and women.
- A. In our generation many of the battles of secular society have found their way into the church. This is particularly true of the feminist movement of the past 30 years. Equal rights has become the great mantra chanted from coast to coast. Some today are trying to redefine Scripture to accommodate the standards of our culture.
- B. The Bible teaches us God's plan for men and women. As we stand before God in Christ we stand as equals. But God created men and women distinctively different. He did not create man and woman with the same function. This is the truth of Scripture. It is the fact of creation.
- I. The Bible gives us several examples of women with the gift of prophecy but the Bible gives us the parameters by which they practiced their gift.
- A. In Exodus 15 we find Moses' sister Miriam was a prophetess
1. It would appear that her role was primarily with women
Exodus 15:20 – “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.”
 2. She had to maintain her proper place before her brother Moses. God's anger was kindled against her when she tried to usurp the authority of Moses. **Numbers 12:10** Miriam *became* leprous, *white* as snow:
- B. In Judges 4 we read of Deborah, a judge and prophetess
Judges 4:4 – “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.”
1. Deborah is often used as proof that women can preach. We shouldn't use the Book of Judges as an example to us of how we should live. First remember that Deborah lived at a time when every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
Judges 17:6 – “In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but every man did that which was* right in his own eyes.”
Judges 21:25 – “In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.”

2. The Scriptures tell us something different about Deborah as a judge
 - a. We find God raised up Othniel
Judges 3:9 – “And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.”
 - b. We find God raised up Gideon
 - c. We find God raised up Sampson
 - d. But with Deborah we simply read
Judges 4:4 – “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.”
3. Still, we find that she *was* judging Israel. But we find the Scriptures affirming the difference between men and women. Woman was created to be man’s helper.
 Deborah recognized her place and Barak’s place
Judges 4:6 – “And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?”
4. Barak, however, was weak and cowardly seeking leadership from the woman
Judges 4:8 – “And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.”
5. Deborah reminded him that he would receive dishonor as God would deliver the enemy into the hand of a woman
Judges 4:9 – “And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”
6. It would seem that Deborah practiced her gifts in the vacuum left by spineless men. It should still be noted that it is Barak, not Deborah mentioned in Hebrews 11
Hebrews 11:32 – “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:”
7. You can also see a distinction between the prophetic work of Deborah and the male prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah or Ezekiel.

II. What about the daughters of Philip?

- A. We are given some very basic information
 1. They were virgins – unmarried under the authority of their father
 2. They were prophets – they had the gift of prophecy and used it to edify God’s people
 3. They did not occupy the office of prophet – because all of the offices in Christ’s church are men. Their gift did not include preaching

4. People are often notorious about reading into Scripture what is not there. Example: Grudem – “This must certainly be a record of women who prophesied in the assembly of a group of Christians, for the fact that Luke reports it strongly suggests that Paul and those with him were present while these women were prophesying. So here is an example of women (or girls—there is no indication of their age) who seem to have used the gift of prophesy freely in the church.”
- B. How and where did they prophesied we are not told – But the Bible does not leave us completely in the dark. Although we are limited in information here we are blessed with other passages that shed light.
1. The primary rule of hermeneutics is called: **The Analogy of Faith** - this means that Scripture interprets Scripture. No part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture.
 2. It is important that all of our attitudes and beliefs are shaped by Scripture. We always we need to seek to be honest in our approach to Scripture. Scripture will always be an accurate interpreter of Scripture.
 3. We do know that they would have been subject to God’s law restricting women from expounding God’s Word to men
1 Timothy 2:11-12 – “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. ¹² But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”
 4. We do know that they would not have prophesied in the public assembly of the church
1 Corinthians 14:34 – “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.”
 5. How and where they prophesied they would have remembered the distinction between women and men. They would not have dishonored their head which is the man.
1 Corinthians 11:5 – “But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.’
- III. What does the Bible teach us concerning women in the church?
- A. Women have an important role in the church.
1. Women are gifted for many roles and ministries in the church but these ministries are always performed in the context of the Biblical distinctions of manhood and womanhood.
 2. The woman’s role in the church should be seen as complimentary and supportive in the context of male leadership.
- B. Women are permitted to teach women and children, but not men
Titus 2:4-5 – “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

1. Paul remained at the home of Philip for many days yet the text does not say that the daughters of Philip prophesied to Paul. Contrast them with Agabus.
2. This does not mean that women are not valuable in their knowledge.
 - a. Women can surely have all of the spiritual gifts but this does not mean there are no restrictions in how they exercise those gifts.
 - b. Remember how Priscilla accompanied her husband in teaching Apollos.
3. And we must never forget the nature of our union with Christ
 - a. In Christ we are all one
Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
 - b. Our relationship with Christ is rich and full – we are all heirs, joint heirs. We are all the bride of Christ

Conclusion:

1. We should be very thankful to God for our ladies. And our ladies must be confident in their value to the church.
2. Just because God has set parameters around our service in no way should cause any to claim they have nothing to do.
 - a. There are millions, no billions in this world who are without Christ – most women and children.
 - b. There are countless people in our own city who are hurting and in need of God’s mercy.
 - c. There is a continual need to bathe the work of God in prayer, to pray for the preaching of His Word and the prosperity of His church.
3. And the world is in great need for Godly wives and mothers to demonstrate to others how to honor God with their lives.
4. God has raised up all of us to labor in His kingdom for His glory.