

Prophetic Dream: God Admonished Me to Affirm Women Pastors

It was a Saturday evening, and I was prayerfully preparing to speak the following morning at a church that had been founded, and pastored for many years, by a woman. I had ministered there before, and it seemed like a very successful church that loved and respected its female pastor.

For years, I had studied the issue of women in leadership and had become convinced that God calls women to preach, pastor and do all the things He calls men to do in the church. However, as I considered a topic for my message, I said to myself, "I don't need to address the 'woman issue' and show the biblical basis for women in leadership. Gloria is respected and loved by her congregation, so there is no need for me to go there."

Despite my prayers and preparation, I went to bed without a sense of direction, but having decided I would not address the issue of women pastors and leaders.

A God-Given Dream

I am not one given to visions and dreams, but that night, I had a very vivid dream. Amazingly, it was not skewed in any way, but everything was exactly as it is in real life.

In the dream, I was sitting in the pastor's office the next morning with Gloria and two of her associates. We were in our Sunday best with the men, including myself, wearing jackets and ties. As the worship team led the congregation in the final song, we all stood to go on the platform where, in a few minutes, I would be introduced and preach the message for that Sunday morning.

As we stood, I looked down and was shocked to see that my feet were bare. I could hardly believe my eyes. Here I was, all dressed up with a suit and tie, but with no shoes.

I hurried out the door to the parking lot to see if I had taken off my shoes during the 45-minute drive to the church. I searched frantically under and around the seats, but there were no shoes to be found. I then stood by my van and looked at my watch, wondering if I had time to rush home and get my shoes.

It was obvious I didn't! The pastor would be turning the service to me in just a few minutes. I then thought, "Maybe I can make some sort of joke about my bare feet," but decided that would not go over with this congregation.

I stood by my van feeling so distressed and wondering, "How could I do this? How could I get all dressed up and go out without my shoes!"

At that point, I woke up.

A New Understanding of the 'Gospel of Peace'

I knew God was speaking, and the first Scripture that came to mind was Ephesians 6:15 (NASB), which reads, "and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

I had always thought of the word "peace" in this passage as referring to that nice internal sense of tranquility and well-being. However, as I took a fresh look at the verse, I realized that Paul was talking about the kind of peace that occurs when different parties that have been at odds and separated, lay down their hostilities and are reconciled in peace. It is the kind of peace that occurs when warring nations lay down their weapons, and there is a signing of "peace."

I then saw that the "gospel of peace" is the good news of what

Jesus has done to remove the racial, social and gender animosity that has divided the human race since the fall.

Walls of Separation Have Been Removed 'in Christ'

The second passage that came to mind was Ephesians 2:14 (MEV), which reads, "For He is our peace, who has made both groups one and has broken down the barrier of the dividing wall." Paul is specifically addressing, in this passage, the racial separation of Jews and Gentiles. He says that Christ is our peace—the point of reconciliation—and that He has broken down the middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile.

In the Jerusalem temple of Paul's day, there was an actual wall that kept Gentiles separated from Jews. There were signs posted on this wall warning Gentiles not to proceed any further on the threat of death. During one of Paul's visits to Jerusalem, the Jews tried to kill him because they thought he had taken a Gentile—an Ephesian—past this dividing wall (Acts 21:27-29).

There was also a wall that separated the women so that the only individuals who had free access to the sanctuary were Jewish males. These walls divided the people according to both race and gender.

Paul now says to the Ephesian believers that in Christ, these dividing walls have been removed. This is what he is referring to in Galatians 3:28 where he says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Paul is saying that the old value system wherein people were judged, valued and divided according their race, sex or class have been removed in Christ. Jesus broke down these walls of separation and discrimination so that all may now move freely in His presence and in obedience to Him.

The Good News of Reconciliation

I now saw clearly that the gospel of peace is the good news of what Jesus has done to reconcile fragmented humanity to Himself and then to one another. It is the good news that the walls of separation and discrimination based on sex, race and class have been broken down.

I saw as never before that excluding women from leadership based on their sex is not a part of the gospel. It is, in fact, a truncated gospel. How dare anyone build walls of exclusion and separation in the one community (the church) where they have been eliminated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

I now saw that to have one's feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace means that we stand ready, at a moment's notice, to declare that in Christ those dividing wall are gone and everyone has free access to His presence and are free to obey Him.

Do You Have Your Shoes On?

As I reflected on my dream and the new understanding of Paul's admonition to have "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," I heard the Holy Spirit say:

"Don't ever go anywhere without your shoes on. Don't ever go anywhere without being ready to declare that 'in Me' the walls of separation, discrimination and marginalization have been broken down and removed."

What about you? Do you have your shoes on? Are you prepared to declare the gospel of peace? {eo}

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