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March, 1999; revised 2007
(*Italics used for emphasis.*)

THE GENDER DISPENSATION
or
The Error of Gender Biased Theology

“And you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power: in Whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, *in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ*: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also *you are risen with Him* through the faith of the operation of God, Who has raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you *all* trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, *nailing it to His cross;*”
(Colossians 2:10-14)

The best way of correcting error is to begin with Truth! The New Testament is filled with the doctrine of the justification of the believer by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Never once is justification portrayed as doing anything, more or less, for one gender over another. The purpose of this paper is to present the doctrine of complete justification and its implications for our church-body life, without gender bias for this life and the next. Scripture texts proclaiming this are numerous; however, I will limit myself primarily to the letters to Timothy, Ephesians, Romans and the Gospel of John, with other Scripture for example and explanation.

I will begin by commenting on 1Timothy 2:11-13, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” and 1Corinthians 14:34-35, “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 says the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

It has been my experience that the most popular interpretation of these verses has, for women, all but fully negated the liberation which the rest of the New Testament plainly declares; expressly that all believers in Christ are now His peculiar people and His Holy Priesthood (1Peter 2:5&9). Women too, are no longer under the law, any law, except the wonderful law of faith!
(Romans 3:27)

Two examples of traditional interpretation are: 1.) A Christian woman by reason of her gender, is not qualified, via this interpretation, to instruct a male over the age of 18 in the things that pertain to the Gospel, intimating that teaching the Truth of God brings with it an authority from which she

is barred. 2.) She is not fit to serve in the distribution of Communion (although she may labor in its preparation), again because praying in thanksgiving over the elements and distributing of the same implies, according to traditional interpretation, an authority from which she is also disqualified.

There are many more objections to women using their gifts, even denying them certain gifts, imbedded in traditional interpretation of Scripture. It is my desire, via this paper, to offer plausible interpretations of these verses that will neither violate their Biblical context nor negate the principle of justification-based liberty for *all* believers, which doctrine is clearly taught elsewhere in the New Testament!

Acts 15:8-11, “And God, which knows the hearts, bares them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and *put no difference between us and them*, (Jews and Gentiles, with no exclusion of women! Please allow me to use the feminine in the remaining) *purifying* their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt you God, to put a yoke upon the neck of God’s women, which neither our mothers and fathers nor we are able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, *even as they*.”

Also see Acts 15:19-20 & 28-31. Christ freed His women from isolation and bondage which once was imposed upon them before His work of redemption! Acts 15:8-11 speaks of purifying the hearts of all His children, without respect of persons.

Verses 1-16 of 1Corinthians, chapter 11, declares the complete justification of women, in that they too are a new creation. Here, Christ tells us to “*put off*,” but some would have women “*put under!*”

The epistle of 1Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy who was ministering to the church in Ephesus. A brief view of the religious climate of this city can be found in the book of The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 19. Ephesus was a city of Asia that was strong in the belief of female deities, Diana being of particular importance to Ephesus. Very simply stated, female deity worship stated two main doctrines; female deity was the source of life and the source of knowledge. What Paul is teaching in 1Timothy 2:11-13 is not *who* ought to teach, but rather, *what* ought to be taught. Paul corrects this error by telling the creation story according to the book of Genesis. Men have used this portion of the epistle to teach the erroneous doctrine of an order of creation that is biased toward the male gender. The account in Genesis does not support any special privilege being given to Adam because he was created first. Paul’s instruction to Timothy was to stop women from teaching that there was a female deity or a deity of any kind superior to God the Creator, and that in reality, there is no other god but God, Himself. The issue is not the order of creation but more importantly, Who the true and only Creator is. There is nothing in the Genesis account that supports an order of creation as reason for domination/superiority/authority of men over women. God’s statement in Genesis 3:16 is a description of the sad consequence of Eve’s sin just as the toiling in the ground for sustenance was the sad consequence of Adam’s sin. The pain in childbirth is not labor pains in payment for sin, for all sin has been paid for in Christ at Calvary. No woman pays for Eve’s sin in laboring to deliver a child. If that were so, then women would be competing with the Blood of our Savior in the expiation of sin. Such thought is Biblically wrong and abominable indeed! The true pain in childbearing is the knowledge that our children are born with the same sinful nature as their parents, which can result only in death for those children. Multiplied conception, another result of the fall, is now necessary to perpetuate the race.

Chapter 14 in the first epistle to the Corinthians is likewise misinterpreted as teaching that God's women are commanded to silence in (verses 34-35) without regard to the teaching of the first 33 verses of the same chapter where *ALL* are instructed to prophesy in an orderly manner so that all can be blessed by what is said, *not by who said it!* The silence enjoined by Paul in this passage is a conditioned silence. Prophets and tongues-speakers (both women and men) must be quiet/silent under certain conditions. Paul's intent is to provide order for worship, allowing all believers to exercise their gifts as prompted by God's Holy Spirit! He is not commanding an unconditional, universal silence in the church specific to women. In fact, he then asks a very diagnostic question which I pose to my dear brothers, "What? Came the Word of God out from you? Or came it to you only?" It is my hope and prayer that my brethren will consider to study the Scriptures more thoroughly and then come back to these two questions and see if it can be said that the Word of God came only to men and that only men can prophesy (preach, pastor, teach).

In Genesis 3:16 God did not give men authority over women, although centuries of exegesis of that verse has erroneously expressed that to be so. Rather, God is declaring how selfishness and desire for control would now rule in the heart of Adam as a consequence of their sin. The sin of selfishness and control is not limited to Adam any more than the pain of begetting children with a sinful nature is limited to Eve. Selfishness and desire for control is what Jesus, Himself, has come not only to reverse but completely eliminate in the human heart by His blessed indwelling Holy Spirit in every believer, woman or man. See Matthew 20:25-27, "But Jesus called them unto Him and said, you know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall *NOT* be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Oh how we err, even sin, when we make gender a reason for obtaining power over another human being – God forbids it, especially among His own!

The Scripture teaches that God silences demons, not His own blood-bought daughters! It is not recorded anywhere in His Word that His Blood bought one thing for men and a different thing for women. He never speaks in terms of "roles" implying a limitation of one gender while empowering the other. This would indeed be a dispensation: a dispensation of roles according to gender.

Romans 4:24-25, "...but for us also, to whom it/righteousness shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." I am justified! And that without role distinctions and apart from my gender. Christ says to me in John 6:63, "It is the Spirit that quickens; and *flesh* profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." And in Galatians 3:1&3, "O foolish Galatians (or women), who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?...Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" And the answer is a resounding, "*NO!*" Paul is speaking here of human effort and our human effort is clothed in flesh, and our human flesh/gender neither qualifies nor disqualifies us – Praise God! It is by grace that we are saved and *accepted equally* in the Beloved! My full and equal acceptance in the Beloved is not based upon the gender of my body.

When I teach women's Bible studies, I sometimes suggest that we read a particular text using feminine nouns and pronouns, but only when the nouns and pronouns refer to human beings

generally and not to males particularly. It is profitable for us to do this because our spiritual and secular cultures have, even if only subliminally, suggested the idea that the male nouns and pronouns primarily, if not exclusively, mean men. The letter to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 16 is an example of this. To read Scripture in this manner enforces the truth of the text that God means for women as well as for men. "...That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner woman." This is not a small exercise. Without fail, there is always a sigh of wonder as women see what is really theirs in Christ Jesus. As unbelievable as it may seem to my brothers, many women admit that they were not aware of how distant some verses were to them until they began reading the general male nouns and pronouns in the feminine. Perhaps if men engaged in this same exercise, they might feel the exclusionary force of a gender-restricted reading.

How often we hear from our pulpits about God's desire to use "*men*" of God when "*people*" of God is the accurate portrayal of God's mind regarding preacher/teachers as found in His word. Note that the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12 are not gender specific. For example, the text in 1 Timothy 3:1, "This is a true saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work." The traditional understanding of the word "man" in this verse is that this refers only to a male. However, this pronoun translated from the Greek in this verse of Scripture refers to any human being. Also, because most translations of 1 Timothy 3:2 state that the "someone" must be married to only one *wife*, traditional interpretation therefore determines that the "someone" must be a man. However, the meaning of this verse is that the someone must not have married more once. It is interesting to note that traditional interpreters have no problem with including women as equal offenders in the list of sins found in 1 Timothy 1:9-10!

Consider the following verses from Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:13, "...In Whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of *truth*, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were *sealed* with that *Holy Spirit* of *promise*, which is the earnest of our *inheritance* until the *redemption* of the *purchased possession*, unto the praise of His glory."

All this truth with no hint of gender implying less for women than for men.

The importance of this study is that this is most certainly not a "women's issue." It is clearly and most importantly a "Blood of Christ issue!"

It is by Christ's precious Blood that this verse is for women the *same* as it is for men. *It is the same truth, the same sealing, the same Holy Spirit, the same promise, the same inheritance, the same redemption, the same purchased possession, by the same Christ.* If women are, by reason of their gender, barred from any calling and work of God (this barring being inflicted by human beings and not God), then it must be that the mediator for women is not that Mediator of the Holy Scriptures. If, according to traditional reasoning, she remains bound by her gender, in bondage to her female flesh, her salvation is not on the level of her brothers. However, Scripture does not teach a salvation that is any less than complete, spiritually or physically! When, by traditional reasoning, women are relegated to a secondary redemption, there must be a negating of the Biblical doctrine of Mediator, resulting in a secondary mediator of a secondary covenant. But Scripture

testifies in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men (human beings), the man Christ Jesus."

That is why this is a *Blood of Christ issue!*

Ephesians 1:3-10, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy* and *without blame* before Him in love: Having predestined us unto the *adoption* of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, where He has made us *accepted* in the beloved. In Whom we have *redemption through His blood*, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He has *abounded* toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made know unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might *gather together in one all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him."

Again, these blessings are without qualification or gender bias of any kind.

His women too, are holy and without blame before Him. If a woman's gender bars her from preaching and teaching then she must yet, in some way, be in her sins and still somewhat in blame before Him. This would mean that God has established gender-specific sins: the blood of Christ cleanses males from all their sins, but that same blood fails to remove specifically female sins. Those sins are directly linked to the shape and location of her reproductive organs and all that those organs entail physiologically, because that is what makes females to be females in the flesh and not males. I have never heard a preacher preach to women as to when and by what sacrifice they will be made fit in their female flesh to serve the living God as do their Christian brothers. If indeed there remains some intrinsic flaw in women, then our Christ and His sacrifice for us/women must necessarily be flawed also by its inability to fully cleanse us from all sin and unrighteousness. God forbid!!

The glorious truth of gathering together in one *all* things in Christ was from His resurrection and is even to this present time.

Ephesians 1:17-21, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you (women too) the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened..." My commentary on this verse is Matthew 5:14-16, "You are the light of world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men (human beings) light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." If God has not saved women to the uttermost, how then shall their Heavenly Father be fully glorified in them? We stand in danger of wresting the Scriptures if we say that women are "*equal but.*" Biblically, we cannot espouse such a thought without negating God's full redemption of His daughters!

There will always be a great need for quiet and secret deeds that require no attention or accolades; work done in the shadows and behind the scenes. But to restrict women to perpetual shadows because of a supposed gender inferiority is an insult to the fullness of what God has done for

women. The blessed work of foot-washing, a lowly task indeed, flows from a *fully* thankful and grateful heart! I have had the opportunity in retreat to do that very service unto my brethren, but it was because my Saviour commissioned me to do so in deep gratitude for what He has done for me and not because foot washing is relegated to me by gender.

Ephesians 2:4-5, “But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, by grace you are saved.” We err greatly and sin against God when we intimate that women, because of their gender, are *less quickened, less saved, and that by a lesser grace!*

Ephesians 2:6, “And has *raised us up together, and made us to sit together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Have women been assigned bad seats behind some post with a hindered view of what God has done? Not according to v. 6! If God has *raised* (past tense) us up *together*, then *together in every way* are women and men raised. I have not found a gender bias in Scripture. I have only found it in the interpretations, teachings, and traditions of men.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace are you saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man (or woman) should boast.” All of the elect are saved through the same faith in spite of ourselves or our gender. I hear boasting in my brothers when they claim some of the gifts listed in Romans 12 and 1Corinthians 12 as being exclusively for them because of their male flesh. Though some may vehemently deny such boasting, it is boasting nevertheless when one claims freedoms and privileges for oneself and denies them to another. Men who would put emphasis on the flesh as a basis for gifts allowed them, do well to remember that according to John 6:36, “the flesh profits nothing!”

1Corinthians 1:4-7, “...that *in everything you are* enriched by Him, *in all utterance, and in all knowledge*; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: *so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

God’s own Word is perfectly clear – He gives to His daughters as he gives to His sons!

Ephesians 2:11, “Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ...” If any declare the daughters of Christ to be His children of a lesser degree, then they are by their own definition, also declaring that His daughters have no part in that circumcision made without hands (Colossians 2:11a). If this is our mindset, then we must confess and repent of this sin of not only misrepresenting the Body of Christ, but also disfiguring it. And we stand in danger of not discerning Christ’s Body each time we come to His Table (1Corinthians 11:29). God forgive us all!

Ephesians 2:14-16 & 18, “For He is our peace, Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two one new man (being), so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having *slain the enmity* thereby;...for through Him *we both have access by one Spirit* unto the Father.”

Clearly Paul is speaking of the reconciling of believing Jews and believing Gentiles not only to Him but also to one another. This means that the one who has been considered as being the greater, a circumcised male Jew, has been reconciled and made one in Christ with the one considered the lesser, a female Gentile. The Redemption accomplished is unspeakably glorious – unity on every front!

Consider the prayer of the ancient Jewish man, “I thank you Lord that you have not made me a gentile, a slave, or a woman.” It is interesting, if not somewhat humorous, to note that every believing male, Gentile and Jew, will be presented one day to Christ as His Bride (female!). Believing women, Gentile and Jew, are also His Bride and no less! If indeed your understanding of Genesis 3:16b intimates inferiority or subordination of women to men, then know this, that this too has been done away with at Calvary. All barriers have been brought down by the Blood of Christ, and glory of glories, the flesh can neither profit nor enbondage: thanks indeed be to God for His unspeakable gift (2Corinthians 9:15)!

Ephesians 2:19, “Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow citizens* with the saints, and of the *household* of God; and are built upon the *foundation* of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” Since we are all citizens of the same country (Hebrews 11:16), all of the same household, all built upon the same foundation, then of necessity, we all possess the same *fullness* that is in Christ regarding His church. What Christ has bought for women at the Cross is not to be trifled with or minimized. To do so is to trifle with and minimize the effect of His shed Blood for some of His saints. How offensive to God is such a thought!

She who has been forgiven much, loves much, see Luke 7:40-48. If she has not been *fully* forgiven, then she cannot fully love her Savior! If I have died in Christ and am raised in newness of His life, then all that pertains previously to my flesh is done away by and in Him: His life is now mine, Philippians 1:21. God who indwells me by His Holy Spirit is the God of the Scriptures; therefore, I cannot be indwelt with Anyone less. When I stand one day before God, I will not claim that I lived my life by a lesser Spirit. As a sinner, I received the same death sentence as every one else. Same death sentence; same redemption; same blessed Spirit!

“My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought, *my sin not in part, but the whole*, is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord O my soul!”
(Horatio G. Spafford, 1873)

He took upon Him all my infirmities and He did not give any of them back because of my gender! Consider the tenth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, particularly verses 17 & 18, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” Everything about me before the Cross is dead—all of it! Jesus did not leave me half cleansed from my sin; He did not leave me bound by my gender and yet declare me free. Praise God that by His Word I know that in Him I am fully justified; a new creature; FREE—no earthly baggage!

If you have read this far, then please continue with me for just a few more words on the Gospel of John.

John 8:31b-32&36, “If you continue in My word, then are you my disciples indeed: and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”

Christ has freed His women in every way: that’s what freedom is; to be without bonds, free from the old nature and its deeds; being made a new creation! If I am a new creation, then I am no longer walking according to the flesh. If, however, I am bound in any way by my female flesh, then Christ *has not finished the sacrifice* for me as He did for my brothers. I would not, as yet, have freedom in Christ or have any part in the new creation, I would be still in my sins, without hope and without God in this world. I would be of all “men” most miserable (1Corinthians 15:19b). God forbid! That would indeed be a terrible Gospel; even no Gospel at all for a woman.

Finally, consider how Jesus kept in line with His ethnic nationality and religion in that He was born under the law, keeping the law of the Jews through to the Passover. He conformed to the Jewish nation ethnically and religiously but not culturally! His communion with women broke with all cultural and religious mores of His time. He taught Mary who sat at His feet to hear His words (Luke 10:42); He promised the Messiah to Eve (Genesis 3:15); He announced to Mary, Jesus’ conception and birth (Luke 1:26-38); a woman anointed Him for His death and burial (Mark 14:3-9); and the announcement of His resurrection from the dead (John 20:15-17) was first conveyed to a woman. All of these revelations were given to women, and they understood! It is time we pay attention to Him; that is, His full inclusion of women into His Body!

Let us *all* beware lest men put themselves into a New Testament Levitical priesthood from which the Old Testament priesthood excluded women and the New Testament speaks nothing of. For my High Priest is of the tribe of Judah, after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 7), and my holy priesthood is also of Him! Whatever infirmities and vileness I walked out of the garden with in Eve, I left at the foot of my Savior’s cross, and I walk *now* with Him without them.

“It is finished:” even for me! Hallelujah!

P.S. To my sisters in Christ, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ!” Colossians 2:8