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“THE WOMAN’S ARMY”

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11 Timothy 1:1-8 (a)

There has been a great deal of debate over the place of women in the armed services.

Certainly, women served notably in World War II, and they were a big factor in the ultimate triumph of our nation over its enemies. Much of what they did was behind the scenes, servicing those who were on the front lines. Women flew fighters and bombers and ferried them across the Atlantic to the battlefield. They worked in factories, in communications and clerical positions. God-only-knows what a great and heroic role they played as nurses, right out on the front lines. And our nation is greatly in their debt.

However, our present debate is over women being sent into the front line of battle as fighter pilots and in other dangerous roles, which might pit them directly against men, in a life-and-death struggle. “Women’s libbers” declare that it is their “right of equality” to do so. Chivalrous males still feel that men should protect women.

Now the debate has escalated with recent episodes of gals, who cry “sexual harassment,” after demanding equality. And the girls, who wanted to be “one of the boys,” made a big to-do about the “Tail-hook Convention.”

Much ado has been made over the girls, who want to crash the hallowed and segregated halls of our all-male military colleges. Can they do push-ups? Everybody knows that men have more upper-body strength than women.

And many frankly are disturbed, when a co-ed aircraft carrier returned from several months at sea, with so many pregnant girls that it was nicknamed “the love boat.”

I frankly believe that we need to give more serious thought, before we “equalize” women’s place in the military.

However, I am proud to tell you that God has never had any such problems in His “Army That All Hell Cannot Stop.” There has always been a place for the fairer sex.

Why, some of the greatest heroes, whose stories are recorded in the Book, were women who served with distinction, in that great volunteer army of the ages. And, as the battle rages and as we countdown for that final conflict for control of planet Earth, God is still attempting to enlist women into His service.

So today I would like to show you **some of the places where God needs women to serve** in “the army that all Hell cannot stop.”

Consider the need for...

HOME SCHOOLERS 1 Timothy 1:5

Now when I talk of home-schooling, I am not limiting my thoughts to those wonderful souls who are presently engaged in the movement to take our children out of the government school system, where they will be socially engineered, according to Washington’s standards. These mothers are attempting to offer their children both academic and character training, under their won tutelage. (And I heartily endorse the courage of all, who are making this effort.)

However, right now I am thinking of all mothers, who train their children for life and faith. I went to public schools, but I was still trained for living and given a strong faith by my dear mother, at home. My greatest lessons for life were learned at my mother’s knee—and across my mother’s lap, as she applied the ”board of education to the seat of learning!”

Truly, a mother’s greatest challenge and greatest contribution is to be made in the home, as she trains her children for life.

Paul paid a great tribute to Timothy’s mother and grandmother, by names. Paul had the greatest respect for this stalwart and faithful young man, Timothy, who had stuck with him through Hell and high water. And it was this Timothy, alone, to whom Paul would dare to entrust the development of the churches, which he had started. And Paul knew who was responsible for this young man’s outstanding character. God had used his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, to shape that character. And Paul made that clear, in this timeless letter.

Oh, let us never underestimate the importance of a woman’s role in the home. It is her ultimate challenge. It will lead to her greatest triumph. It is her utmost measure of success. And she is “rich indeed,” if she has children who give her a grateful sense of a job well done!

It has worried me how our society has glamorized all sorts of women; the sophisticated woman, the liberated woman, the sexy woman, the foxy woman, the savvy woman, the corporate woman. We hear all of these terms, as an effort to elevate woman’s image.

But there has also been a downplaying of woman’s role in the home, as if it were second best to some glamorous career. Even first lady Hillary Clinton, in their first term, made some slurring remark about staying home and baking cookies...as if it was more important for her to use her talents in trying to give our nation a communist-style medical system (God forbid!).

Listen, my friends, I firmly believe that a woman, in the Lord's army, will receive her greatest ribbons and medals for what she has done with her children in the home. And she will probably do the most positive good for the nation, by sending out the kind of citizens, who can make our nation great.

What's the old adage? "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." I truly believe that our mothers can do more to improve the future of our society by working with their own children than they can do in any other effort.

Listen, it doesn't take some sort of a global "village" to raise a child—where United Nations gatherings send out mandates on how to train our children, around the world. A good mother and dad can do nicely, thank you!

May I challenge you women to give strong consideration to your place in the Lord's army as a "home schooler"...as one who makes your best effort instill faith and godly character in your own children.

Now I know that some of you are single parents, and you are trying to wear several hats, out of necessity. Our special prayers go with you. And we shall do our best to under gird you.

My point is simple. See your parenting role as your ultimate place in the Lord's army.

And that role does not end with childhood. Sometimes our parenting reaches its highest potential, after our children have left the nest. Then is when they come back to us for advice and support on an adult level.

And grandparenting is such a wonderful opportunity to share our faith and values. Even when children rebel against their parents, they still have a warm and nonthreatening place in their hearts for their grandparents. And we can often do a world of good.

NO wonder Paul's inspired letter mentions, with such honor and respect, that Timothy's faith and character was the result of his "grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice..."

A second need for women in the Lord's army is in...

II

GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Yes, God has a place for women in our nation's leadership. If we are going to turn our nation back to its godly heritage, certainly there must be many feminine voices heard!

Some even think that it would be good to have a woman president. They believe that, with all of the crooks and scandals in our present national leadership, it might be good to have a woman. After all, women seem to, by nature, be more trust-worthy and sincere.

Oh well, this is not the place to debate the issue as a woman for president.

All I do know is that God has often used women in government service. Sometimes they have been the salvation of their nations. I think automatically of Queen Esther, the former beauty pageant winner, whom God declared to have come on the scene “for such a time as this.”

I especially think of Deborah, whose story is found in Judges, chapter 4-5. She was one of the women heroes in God’s chronicles of victories.

It was a bad time for the nation. People had forgotten the God, who had led them to start the nation. They had given in to materialism and the fast buck. It sounds a bit like the U.S.A. in 1997, doesn’t it?

Well, as usually is the case, hard times fell on them. Their inner moral weakness led to outward weakness, and Israel was defeated by stronger nations, which surrounded her.

But finally the people woke up and cried out to God for mercy and help. And God chose to use a woman, named Deborah, to lead them.

It says that she was a “prophetess”—woman preacher. When there is not a man to assume leadership among God’s people, thank God when a woman will not default.

Now she did not want this responsibility. She felt it was the place for a man to lead out. So she went for a man, named Barak. And she challenged him to lead ten thousand men into battle. And she tried to bolster up his sagging faith, by reminding him that God had promised them a victory.

Well (Judges 4:8) Barak agreed, reluctantly. He said: “If you will go with me, I will go...” But I’m not about to, if you are not there to hold my hand. It sounds like Barak was not a he-man, but that he was a she-man!

So she agreed to go with him. But she told him that all the honor for the victory would go to women.

Well, they eventually defeated Sisera and his vast army, which included 900 chariots of iron. It was like going up against 900 tanks with slingshots and spears. But the Lord God was with them, and Israel won.

However Sisera, the enemy commander, escaped. He fled until he was so exhausted that he could not put one foot in front of the other.

Just then he came to some tents. Out of one of them came a lovely young girl, named Jael. She invited him in and gave him some warm milk to drink. That did it. Sisera fell sound asleep.

And Jael, being a loyal Israelite and knowing that Sisera was the enemy commander, grabbed a hammer and a tent peg and drove the peg through Sisera's temples. And that was the end of that!

Wow, girls! How would you like to be called into that kind of service?

And when they sang of victory, in chapter 5, it was a victory for the girls. God had used two women to save the nation.

There is certainly a place for women in government service. Some of our McGregor women have run for office and are now exerting the salty influence of a Christian in the halls of government.

And if we cannot soon find some men, who are genuine statesmen and who cannot be corrupted by politics, who knows, we may have a woman president! I only pray that she will be a dedicated Christian!

There is another area, where God is enlisting women to be a part of His "army that all Hell cannot stop." That is the field of...

III BUSINESS

I understand, according to "Newsweek," that women CEO's have increased to almost half of the leadership in America's business community. The idea, of using women to lead-out in business and education, is nothing new to our God. He was doing that back in Bible days.

Someone said that the first business woman in the Bible was Pharaoh's daughters, because she "discovered a little profit in the bull rushes." Ehhh!

Seriously, one of the heroes in God's army, back in the days of Paul's second missionary journey, was a woman named Lydia. Acts 16:14 tells us that Lydia was "a seller of purple." She apparently owned a business, which sold the purple dye that was used to color the clothes of royalty and the very wealthy. It must have been a very prosperous business.

And it was an international business, mind you. It says that she was headquartered in Thyatira, but she was on business trip to Europe (Macedonia), where she had come to sell her products. She even had a "house" there, in this other city. I mean, this Lydia was a very successful business person.

While working in Philippi, she came into contact with Paul and the Christian gospel. Lydia and her employees (household) were looking for a place to worship, while in that foreign town. They happened upon Paul, as he was preaching on down by the riverside. And it says that her "heart" was "opened" by the Lord. And she gave attention to the things which were spoken by Paul.

In fact, she responded at his invitation to receive Christ. And she was ready to be baptized, on the profession of her faith, right then and there. In fact, it says that her employees were baptized with her.

How wonderful is it, when a Christian employer can have an influence, for Christ, on her employees. And how many women have been used by the Lord in that capacity.

I think immediately of Mary Kay, a highly successful business tycoon, who also sold dyes. Only hers were hair dyes and face paints. (Ha!)

Yes, Mary Kay made a fortune in the cosmetics industry. Yet, all the while she has maintained a Christian testimony. And she has led many of her employees into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

She literally gave millions to her church's amazing expansion (Prestonwood, in Dallas). And all along, she has maintained her Christian testimony in the business world and has remained a source of spiritual inspiration to multitudes. How great!

Listen, gals, there are plenty of places for you to serve and to represent Christ, out there in the world of business and education.

But there is one place in the Lord's army that I do not want you to overlook. It is usually done behind the scenes, so much that it is not often noticed. Jesus also has a place in his army for women, who are...

IV SOUL-WINNERS AND DISCIPLES

And no one illustrates this more clearly than Naomi, whose ministry was highlighted in an entire book of the Bible. The book of "Ruth" tells a story of human tragedy and triumph.

A Jewish family left their homeland, during a time of depression and famine, in order to search for better opportunities in the nation of Moab. The family consisted of Elimelech, Naomi, and their other two sons: Mahlon and Chilion.

It wasn't long, after their arrival, that the two sons fell in love and married girls from Moab. The girls were named Orpah and Ruth. At last, things seemed to be on the upswing for Elimelech's family.

But no. Tragedy struck. First, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi a widow. And tragedy upon tragedy, both of the sons died. Now there were three widows, trying to survive, in times when there was no government assistance.

Well, Naomi decided to return to her family and friends, in Israel. So she urged her daughter-in-law to go back to the security of their own families, there in their native land.

Orpah thought it was a good idea. She respectfully took her leave.

Ruth, however, had become very devoted to her mother-in-law. In fact, it was through Naomi's influence and testimony that Ruth had forsaken the idols and false religion of her country. And Ruth had embraced the true God, Jehovah.

Apparently Naomi's faith, in the midst of all her tragedy and headache, had made a real impression on the younger woman. And instead of going back to her biological family, Ruth said to Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17): "Don't ask me to leave you, nor to turn away from following you; for where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people will be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, will I die, there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part you and me."

Now that was quite a commitment! Obviously, Ruth had made a complete turn-about in her life, because of the witness of Naomi. She may have gone a little overboard there at the end, when she made the rash vow that, "If anything but death part us, may the Lord kill me." That just showed that she was an infant in her new-found faith, and she didn't understand that we don't have to make rash vows, in order to win God's approval.

But the fact is that Naomi had won her. Now Naomi could begin to disciple her. And that she did.

In the story, which followed, the two girls returned to Bethlehem. Naomi was secure with her family and friends.

Ruth had a big adjustment to make. But Naomi taught her. She disciplined this new believer in the ways of God and the ways of his people.

What followed is one of the great love stories of all time. At the harvest, Naomi showed Ruth how to go into fields, with the other women, to gather up the harvest. Anyone could gather what the reapers had missed. That was the way they took care of widows and the poor, in those days.

While Ruth was working, the land owner---a man named Boaz---took one look at her. And then he took another look at her. And he said "Hubba, Hubba, ding, ding. Baby you've got everything! Where have you been at all my life?"

Boaz told his reapers to leave a lot of extra scraps, in the area where this girl was working. And as he proceeded to make an inspection of his farm, he just "happened" to run into Ruth. And "zing went the strings of his heart." (This is the Holbrook translation, you know!)

Well, Ruth wasn't totally unaware of his presence, either. And in the brief encounter, which followed, they found out that they were relatives through Naomi...kissing cousins.

Well, Ruth could hardly wait to tell Naomi. And thus began an innocent but pointed strategy to land Mr. Right. And, through many strange-sounding ways and customs of the times, Ruth and Boaz became husband and wife. And their mother-in-law lived with them "happily ever after."

Don't pay any attention to my teasing. It is really a wonderful story, and I'm sure that God was leading in the union of these two lives, from both directions, in his wonderful providential guidance.

My point, however, is clear. Naomi served the Lord in the midst of all her ups and downs, as a soul winner and as a discipler. She won her daughter in law to the Lord, and she trained her in how to live a life of faith and action for the Lord.

And ladies, that is one of God's highest callings and greatest positions in the "army that all Hell cannot stop. We each can do whatever work we find to do. But we are first and foremost to be soul winners and disciplers.

Our Lord's great commission stands as our highest calling: "Go and make disciples...teaching them to do all the things which I have commanded. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"

Still today, Jesus is recruiting everyone he can, both male and female, to reach out and touch other lives with our personal testimonies and with the good news that Christ died for our sins, so that he can offer us forgiveness and a place in God's everlasting family.

And it is a task, which does not require some special title nor position. There is no special spiritual gift for evangelism. We are all told to be his witnesses,

Naomi won Ruth through her lifestyles and her teachings. She simply walked the talk and talked-up what she had walked.

She operated out of her home. So can we, my friends.

It never ceases to amaze me, when I talk to people, who are seeking to know the Lord. Invariably, they have met someone at work or through the family. Who has touched their lives and impressed them with the way that they handled some difficult situations. They have been brought to the Lord by some faithful Christian witness.

Whenever I find some new Christian, who is growing at a rapid pace in their faith, I find that some relative or friend is helping them, inspiring them, discipling them.

This is such a natural thing to do, if we will only do it. May I challenge you ladies-- and men-- to become soul-winners and disciplers in the Lord's army!

Oh, my woman friends, today the challenge is especially for you. You are wanted and needed in the Lord's army-- the "army that all Hell cannot stop!" Will you enlist today?