

WOMEN TRANSLATORS

Toney L. Smith

There has been a lot of discussion concerning the use of women translators in the last few years. Good men on both sides of this issue have spoken and written giving their point of view. There are also some “far out” ideas relative to the women’s role in the church. Take for example the use of women teachers at the Nashville Jubilee in Nashville, Tennessee. Classes were offered for both men and women in which women were teachers. This of course is in clear violation of 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

This article will not be dealing with such “far out” perversions of the Scriptures. The good men that I know who are using women translators would strongly oppose the use of a woman in the example used above. I would like for us to consider the use of women who translate the message that originated from the mouth of a man. I am not trying to impugn anyone’s character nor am I wanting to question their love for truth. I just simply do not believe that the position is in harmony with God’s word.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 we are given clear and undeniable restrictions for the role of women in the church. Notice, “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.” For our consideration let us notice in particular the phrase, “But I suffer not a woman to teach...” (vs. 12). We are not questioning the usurping of authority over the man. I believe that we all understand that she is not to have the authority. The question is not, “Can she teach?” We know that the Scriptures require her to be a teacher. Passages such as 2 Timothy 1:5 and Titus 2:3-5 shows that she is to be a teacher, but she is restricted as to whom she may instruct. Most all of us would agree that she is not to preach the gospel to a mixed audience. However, we do not all agree as to who the teacher is when a woman is translating to a mixed audience. Is it the man or the woman? There have been many articles written and some debates have been held and still the situation is not resolved! It seems to me that when we determine who the teacher is in these situations, we will have determined whether or not she can translate for the man in mixed company.

For simplicity sake let me pose a question. If a man is preaching the plan of salvation and his translator (man or woman) leaves out one of the steps to salvation, say, the necessity of immersion for remission of sins, which of the two would be the false teacher? The audience hears the message from the one speaking in their language, they obey what they have come to understand. Have they been saved and who would be responsible for the fate of the lost soul? Would it be you or the one whose message was understood, believed and obeyed?

I really believe that if we would simply and honestly answer this question we will then understand that the translator is the one responsible for the understanding or the misunderstanding of God’s plan for salvation.

517 Gaylord St.
Dresden, TN 38225

Nov 1997