

Does God Favor Men Over Women?

Fr. Jacob Nadian
St. Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church of Toronto

The Bible states that in the very beginning of the human race:

✠ “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27)

As we can see from these verses, it says that God created “man” and then explains further by saying “male and female He created them.” So, when He speaks of man, He speaks of all the human race.

Then, the Bible goes further and talks about who is favored or higher than the other saying:

✠ “And The Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Genesis 2:18)

Now, these verses show couple of things:

1. God created both men and women to stand by each other and support each other to the extent of leaving their fathers and mothers to stick together in holy matrimony:

✠ “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24)

2. Both men and women were given authority over all of God’s creation:

✠ “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Genesis 1:28)

However, when sin entered the human race, one of the consequences was that men and women became separated from God. And that basic broken relationship distorted the Divine order in many ways, one of which was that men began to rule over women:

✠ “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you’” (Genesis 3:16)

Over the years, people tried to reach God and to bridge the gap between God and man that sin opened up. However, their efforts have gone in vain and man has remained a sinner, separated from God.

This sinful state has been very evident in the way women have been treated throughout human history by various religions. In ancient times, their babies were sacrificed to idol gods. In Greek times, they were used as prostitutes in the temples. In other cultures, they force women to stay at home and if they have to walk out, they must cover their faces.

However, in Christianity, God Himself elevated the status of women forever when He chose to send His only begotten Son, The Lord Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin. He could have just appeared as a man. However, He chose to be born of a woman to honor women. The words and actions of The Lord Jesus underscored His elevated opinion of women, as did the early church that was established in His name following His ascension into the heavens.

Let us review some of Biblical examples.

1. His first miracle was performed in response to a request from His mother:

✠ “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him: They have no wine... Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.’ And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom” (John 2:1-11)

2. His first revelation of Himself as Messiah was to a woman:

✠ “The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ. When He comes, He will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’” (John 4:25- 26)

3. One of His greatest miracles was performed at the request of two women:

✠ “Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed The Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, the sisters sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick’... Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go’” (John 11:1-44)

4. Women were serving God and followed Him to the cross:

✠ “And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons” (Matthew 27:55-56)

✠ “There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem” (Mark 15:40-41)

5. His death was venerated by a woman:

✠ “For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Matthew 26:12-13)

† “She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Mark 14:8-9)

6. Women observed His burial:

† “Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb” (Matthew 27:57-61)

7. Following His resurrection, He appeared first to a woman:

† “Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb... Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni’, which is to say, Teacher” (John 20:1- 16)

8. He commissioned women to preach His resurrection and ascension:

† “Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you. So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me’” (Matthew 28:1- 10)

† “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them: I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17)

9. Women shared in the prayers with the disciples after the ascension of the Lord Jesus:

† “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14)

10. The Holy Spirit descended on all men and women at Pentecost fulfilling the prophecies and also other women were prophesying:

✠ “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh: Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17)

✠ “On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied” (Acts 21:8-9)

11. Women were among the very first “believers” or “Christians” who made up the early church:

✠ “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14)

✠ “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12)

✠ “And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas... Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men” (Acts 17:4, 12)

12. The first church in Philippi started with a group of women in the house of Lydia:

✠ “And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us” (Acts 16:13-15)

13. The early church had many women who labored in The Lord:

✠ “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also... Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa (women), who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis (a woman), who labored much in The Lord” (Romans 16:1,2,6,12)

✠ “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life” (Philippians 4:3)

14. St. Priscilla helped St. Paul in the service with her husband St. Aquila:

✠ Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house” (Romans 16:3-5)

✠ “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (1 Corinthians 16:19)

15. God calls all women to be His “sons” for a very seriously important reason:

✠ “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26)

So, where are women here? St. Paul underlines the equal inheritance of the woman and man, because in many cultures and places today, sons are the only ones who had the privilege of inheriting while daughters don’t. So, saying “you are all sons of God”, means you will inherit the way a son inherits from a father. If you try to change these words and say something like “sons and daughters,” it loses its very power to say to the women, “You are equal to a son. When I call you a son, I am saying that you will inherit.” The verses that follow this verse assures this meaning.

16. God calls all people, regardless of race or gender to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven:

✠ “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:27-29)

So, women inherit the promises of Abraham as sons as much as men do as sons.

17. Men and women are sons and daughters who cannot live without the help and support of one another:

✠ “Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11)

There are differences, of course, in what daughters and sons will do in life. She will be able to bear children. The son won’t be able to bear children. So that is a blessing that she has that he won’t have. He will be able to father children and lead a wife and family that she won’t be able to do as a woman. There are differences in what you can be and do, but the massive, important issue is that men and women have a common heritage in the image of God and in worth before God and in the destiny of inheritance from God.

18. The discrimination against women doesn’t come from God. He created them in His own image and likeness, with a capacity to know Him in a personal relationship. Today, when the Bible, which is God’s Word, is read, applied, obeyed, and lived out, women are treated with respect and honor as co-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God:

✠ “and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:17)

✠ “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel (physically, because husbands used to force their wives to do hard work at home, agriculture and other fields), and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7)

19. God loves all of us so much that He died for us:

✠ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3: 16)

Does this verse mean that God loves men only? Or the word “world” means both men and women. God loves us all, He died on the cross to save us all, He created all of us on His image and likeness and He is waiting for all of us to be with Him forever in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20. God spoke of strong women who protected His people from evil:

- ✠ And Uzziah said to her (Judith), ‘O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to strike the head of the leader of our enemies. Your hope will never depart from the hearts of men, as they remember the power of God.- May God grant this to be a perpetual honor to you, and may he visit you with blessings, because you did not spare your own life when our nation was brought low, but have avenged our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God." And all the people said, ‘So be it, so be it!’” (Judith 13:18-20 KJV, 13:23-26 Septuagint)
- ✠ “So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, ‘What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!’ Then Queen Esther answered and said, ‘If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss. So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, ‘Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?’ And Esther said, ‘The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!’ So Haman was terrified before the king and queen. ... So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided” (Esther 7:1-10)

Final Thoughts

For you to be here today, it means that God created you to enjoy His love and His goodness. You were just an idea in His mind and He said this person can truly be a great image of Me. Let each one of us, men and women, enjoy God’s love and His gift of life for us. Let each man honors the integrity, service and responsibility of his manhood and let each woman honors the integrity, service and responsibility of her womanhood.

God doesn’t make a mistake, otherwise He wouldn’t be God. For God to create you as a man or a woman, it means He has great plans for you that will enable you to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Don’t let Satan take away from you this great feeling of being loved by God. Live according to God’s commandment; not according to the commandments, interpretations and teaching of the world that lead to destruction.

Look at how many women saints in our church, starting with the Lady of us, the queen “At Your right hand stands the queen” (Psalm 45:9), St. Mary. She is the only person who will sit at God’s right hand in heaven. Don’t forget that there are many churches built for ladies saints like St. Mary, St. Demiana, St. Rebecca, etc.

May God use your life for the glory of His name; according to His way and His commandments. Glory be to God, now and forever. Amen.