



Let Go of the Chains of Sin

A question every Christian must ask themselves, often more than once, is: “Do we truly believe in Easter?” Easter celebrates Jesus’s resurrection, but it also marks the ushering in of the Kingdom of God. Affirmed at Pentecost, those who believe are no longer condemned to live under sin, imprisoned by the sinful structures of the world. We have been given both the example of perfect obedience to God through Jesus and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit.

Why, then, do so many insist on continuing to live according to the consequences of the Fall? Why hold so tightly to chains that have already been broken? Why do so many work to perpetuate sinful structures in the kingdom of God?

That is just what hierarchical theology does; Whether between women and men or ethnicities, maintaining ontological hierarchies¹ feeds the inequality that resulted from the Fall. In Genesis 1:26–31, God creates human beings in his own image, both male and female, gives them a joint commission to care for the world, and declares this to be good. Genesis 2:18–24 provides more detail as to how humanity was divided into two sexes, but it is not until sin enters the garden in Genesis 3 that any mention of hierarchy is made. From that point on, mutuality is disrupted. The Bible describes a turbulent and painful history fraught with inequality. Many of the expectations for the Messiah centered on relieving the oppression of the strong over the weak (Isa. 9:1–7, 61:1–7, Psalms 10:14).

Jesus’s treatment of women, the marginalized, and the weak throughout his ministry demonstrates what Paul later powerfully declared in no uncertain terms: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The shackles of hierarchy are thrown off in the kingdom of God!

Though sin is still abundant in the world, all Christians are called to live according to the kingdom of God, to “go and make disciples of all nations,” and to “teach them to obey everything [he] has commanded [us]” (Matt. 28:19–20). Christians are commissioned to be active agents

of Christ-like change, to live according to the gospel. This means letting go of the sinful patterns of this world and reorienting our hearts after Jesus’s example (Rom. 12:2).

Over and over again, Jesus elevated women. He relied on them and their support throughout his ministry (Luke 8:3), included them alongside the twelve disciples in his teaching over and against cultural expectations (Luke 10:38–42), and entrusted them to be the first witnesses of his resurrection (Luke 24:1–7). Women were the first gospel preachers (Luke 24:9–10, John 4:39), early teachers, leaders (Acts 18:26, Rom. 16:1–2), even martyrs, shaping the world far beyond the first century.²

The articles in this issue are reflections on women beyond the garden. Consider a deeper understanding of Eve’s faith beyond that fatal day; women’s divine design as *imago Dei* from the first moments of creation; Jesus’s reliance on and inclusion of women in his ministry, and God’s transcendence above categories of sex and gender as Savior to all humankind. Each article presents strong evidence that helps identify and reframe patriarchy as a destructive pattern introduced after the Fall, a pattern undone by Jesus and which no longer binds us. Let us turn loose the chains of sin and live as God designed us: women and men, side by side, serving God together as equal partners. May we grow and fully embrace our freedom in Christ, following him according to our gifts and callings without reservation. The chains have been broken; sin and death have been conquered! He is risen!

Notes

1. Ontological hierarchies, unlike hierarchies based on qualifications, refer to hierarchies based on unchangeable elements of people’s very nature, ranking men, women, certain ethnicities, etc., based solely on those aspects. Hierarchies based on qualifications refer to context-dependent authority: a surgeon has authority in the operating room because of her training and certifications; that same surgeon would not have the same authority in the kitchen of a 5-star restaurant. See Janet George, *Still Side By Side* (Minneapolis, MN: CBE Intl., 2009), 6.
2. Lynn Cohick, Amy Brown Hughes, *Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second through Fifth Centuries* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

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