Wednesday

October 21

Female Prophets and Young Pastoral Associates

Read Luke 2:36-38 and Acts 21:9. What do they tell us about female prophets?

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise

unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. Acts 21:9

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In Old Testament times, God called both men and women to be His messengers. In New Testament times, there is clear evidence of female prophets. Anna was the first one called a "prophetess" in the New Testament. She is someone who, in her full-time ministry, "served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And . . . she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him" *(Luke 2:37, 38, NKJV)*.

Acts 21:9 says that Philip had "four virgin daughters who prophesied" *(NKJV)*. New Testament historians, such as Eusebius, have found later texts that mention where they possibly lived, and then were buried. Either

way, what we do see are women, most likely young women, who have the prophetic gift. We don't know exactly what they prophesied or the extent of their ministry. One thing, however, that we do know about these young women with the prophetic gift: none of their prophetic words made it into the canon, the Bible. That is, like many others, they were non-canonical prophets, true prophets whose words, writings, whatever, were not made into biblical books.

In addition to women prophets, young pastors worked in close association with apostles. Apostles mentored young leaders for ministry. Paul, for instance, addressed Timothy as "a true son in the faith" *(1 Tim. 1:2, NKJV; see also 1 Tim. 4:12)*. Paul taught Timothy the basics of pastoral ministry. He states concerning his calling: "This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously

made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" *(1 Tim. 1:18, NKJV)*.

In Titus 1:4, Paul introduced Titus as "a true son in our common faith" *(NKJV)*. Paul gave Titus the task of appointing leaders for the believers in Crete, a challenging congregation. He offered young Titus spiritual counsel on how to approach this important responsibility, then concluded: "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you" *(Titus 2:15, NKJV)*.

JOHN MARK WAS ANOTHER YOUNG MAN THAT PAUL COMMENDED TO MINISTRY, BUT NOT AT FIRST. JOHN MARK'S FAILURE IN HIS FIRST MINISTRY EXPERIENCE WITH PAUL AND BARNABAS LEFT A NEGATIVE IMPRESSION UPON THE APOSTLE PAUL (ACTS 13:13). BARNABAS WAS STILL OPTIMISTIC PERHAPS PARTLY BECAUSE YOUNG MARK WAS KIN TO BARNABAS (AA 166).

BUT PRIMARILY BECAUSE BARNABAS SAW IN MARK QUALIFICATIONS THAT WOULD FIT HIM TO BE A USEFUL LABORER

"This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after years his solicitude in Mark's behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the blessing of God, and the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker.

Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark and received him as a fellow laborer. He also

recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker "unto the kingdom of God," and "a comfort unto me." Colossians 4:11. Again, not long before his own death, he spoke of Mark as "profitable" to him "for the ministry." 2 Timothy 4:11. . AA 170.1-AA 170.2

Young, old, male, female—we all can have a role to play in God's work. What is your role, and how can you do even more?

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