

## 268 Created as Male and Female

News bulletins this past week have been filled with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women being given the vote for the first time in Britain, an obviously right step that has been taken for granted ever since. The highlighting of this anniversary is a further facet in the long-running debate in our society concerning the right relationship between Man and Woman, a relationship we know from God's Word to be sensitive, precious, and at the very heart of our shared existence, created as we are "in the image of God .... male and female created he them ..." (from Genesis 1.27, AV).

Today, he or she who shouts the loudest and the longest – being well-organised, "media-savvy", and with a short, clear, reasonable-sounding message – can repeat and repeat their message until it gradually becomes "the norm" within society. We see this for example over the unquestioning acceptance of Darwinian evolution; over the still-current campaign to persuade us that homosexual behaviour is as normal and acceptable as heterosexual behaviour; and - the example that concerns us this time and next - over the present, often-aggressive feminist campaign asserting the independence of Woman from Man, with Woman at least as equal to Man or superior to him.

Before we turn to God's Word for guidance over all this, a few examples are appropriate. We see a photo of Theresa May wearing a feminist T-shirt; we hear that Megan Markle is "a strong feminist"; political parties are under pressure to provide women-only shortlists; TV adverts portray the hapless male outwitted by the smart female; women's participation in what have been regarded as primarily male sports, notably rugby and football, is actively promoted in the media, in terms of players, officials and presenters; and 3-set-playing women tennis players insist on equal pay with their 5-set-playing male counterparts. (This last example differs from the fair demand by women for equal pay with men for doing identical work, which is clearly more about plain justice than an overtly feminist agenda). Such feminist examples occur alongside numerous claims of sexual misconduct by men towards women, ranging from inappropriate remarks or touches through to full-blown assault or rape. From all this, not surprisingly a feminist message, that men are actual or potential sexual predators in the face of whom women are downtrodden and powerless, steadily gains ground.

What a relief it is to turn to God's Word! - where we read, "But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. Because of this, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh; so that they no longer are two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has yoked together, let not man put apart" (Mark 10.6-9, Literal, quoting from Genesis 1.27 and 2.24). In these few words, from the foundational book of the Bible and reiterated by the Lord Jesus Christ, we learn so much about the divinely-created relationship that God wishes to exist between Man and Woman, both within marriage and beyond.

We know from these and other Scriptures, and from others to be mentioned next time, that Man and Woman have equal spiritual status in God's sight in terms of salvation (eg., Galatians 3.26-28). We also know that within that equality of status God has set clear differences of role between Man and Woman, for mutual blessing.

The two most obvious and fundamental of these differences are, firstly, that Man is father and Woman is mother (eg., Genesis 3.20); and secondly, that Man is held spiritually accountable before God for the well-being of his wife and children in a way that Woman is not (eg., Ephesians 5.21-28 / I Timothy 2.11-14).

Next time God willing, we can explore these God-given differences of role, seeing their significance within marriage, family life and beyond, and how both play a key part in our scriptural understanding of the phenomenon of feminism.

Meanwhile we do well to thank God for His many blessings! – for male and female, for singleness and marriage, for same-ness and difference, and for love and friendship. May we seek to keep each of these in its correct, God-ordained place, for the glory of God and for His blessing upon us all.

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