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Holy Spirit: Liberating Women—P8

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Today, many scholars, and even classically educated Christians, praise the culture and accomplishments of Greece and Rome—but the true evil of their history has been whitewashed from our “abridged” history books.

This often happens because we read in history that many ancient nations had laws of protection and freedom for people—laws against murder, adultery, and rape, which are not dissimilar from today’s laws. What we’re not told is that this only extended to “citizens.” Slavery was the economy of the ancient world, and these nations were filled with slaves who had no rights—accounting for up to 40% of Italy’s entire population in 100 BC. Almost half of the people living there!

Men and women had completely different access to rights, liberty, and recourse, and prostitution was an institution of all ancient societies, especially Greece and Rome. When we think of prostitution in the Christian era, we are almost always referring to a desperate, but voluntary situation. But unlike today, prostitution was not outlawed or frowned upon—it was not done in secret, but in the open. More importantly, prostitution was woven directly into the slave trade—almost all prostitutes were enslaved adolescent girls—captured, kidnapped, or born into slavery. Do you realize that nearly half of all women in Rome were slaves? Sex slavery was a societal institution in Greece and Rome—one which all citizens partook of as a “right” of citizenship. This doesn’t even include temple prostitution (as at Corinth), which was also a slave-based institutionalized practice of worship.

And it isn’t only a western phenomenon. Child prostitution was practiced as far away as India with young girls dedicated in Hindu temples. The stain extends to nearly all tribal

communities in the Americas and around the world, where adolescent women and children were considered the spoil of raiding parties. The ancient world universally institutionalized rape and child rape as a way of life.

Into this dark page of human history, the Gospel came. Jesus welcomed women into the Kingdom of God—as disciples on equal footing with the men who were to show, even their wives, “*honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered*” (1 Pt. 3:7b). Women were revealed to be co-heirs with men of the promises of God—referred to as “sons of God,” because only sons received an inheritance in the ancient world: “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*” (Gal. 3:26), and “*you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God*” (Gal. 4:7).

As women are co-heirs, the whole Scriptures apply equally to them, meaning the command to “*treat people the same way you want to be treated*” (Matt. 7:12) includes women. This was not the way the ancient world worked. Women were often treated very differently. But now, men were to treat all “*older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity*” (1 Tim. 5:3b). This included the poor, downtrodden, slaves and even prostitutes, for Jesus told men to view women differently than their culture did: “*everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt. 5:28). The Holy Spirit through the Church brought women out of the dark ancient world to be valued as “sons” of God—equal in standing before God to any man.

It is utterly foolish to suggest that the “rich” cultures of the ancient world were dismantled by “irrational,” “ignorant” Christians, as many authors and historians do today. They risk plunging the world into darkness again by hiding stains in history the size of the whole world under a web of lies—all to undermine credit to God for the good He has brought the world through His Church. The credit is His! Amen.