

***“Living For Christ In A Confused and Confusing World”***

**A Study of Paul’s Letters to Timothy**

**Sermon #5**

**“Gender Roles In Worship!”**

**1 Timothy 2:8-12**

In chapter one doctrine was the subject of consideration and his priority in chapter two is public worship. The first section of chapter one (vv. 1-7) dealt with the part that prayer is to have in worship. In his call to prayer he used four different words to describe the scope of prayer. Let’s see if we can recall them. The four parts of prayer are, 1. Supplication 2. Prayers (which is an act of worship) 3. Intercession and 4. Thanksgiving.

And now Paul moves on to a discussion of the respective roles and appropriate behavior of men and women in worship. What we are going to touch on tonight is one of the hottest topics in the Church today – specifically what roles may women play in today’s church.

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 9in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, (10) but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. (11) Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. (12) And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. “

The conclusions we draw from these verses tonight depend largely on the principles we use to interpret them.

As we read these verses we have to decide what here is an eternal truth and what is a cultural expression of that truth.

Rigid literalism looks at these verses and says, 1. Men should always raise their hands when they pray. 2. Women shall never braid their hair or wear jewelry. 3. Women may never under any circumstances teach men.

Others look at these verses and pronounce that Paul’s words were written for a specific cultural problem in Ephesus at the time are now completely out of date and have no application to today’s culture.

But there are principles that transcend the cultural.

Men’s Prayers (v. 8)

Verse eight begins with, "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

Notice first that it says it his desire that "men" pray. Is this to be taken that women are not to pray? Is Paul playing down the role of praying women? No! I think it may be just the opposite. The fact is that women are more naturally inclined to pray than men. Maybe Paul's point is that it is the men who have to be told to pray. He says, "*I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer without anger and disputing.*" His main point however is not about the posture of prayer, but rather the attitude of prayer.

Approaching God with ungracious attitudes is not the way to be sure your prayers are answered (Lk 18:9-14, 1 Pet 3:7, James 1:20). Perhaps this is addressed to men because men tend to have a greater problem with anger than women.

Women's Adornment (vv. 9-10)

"in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, (10) but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works."

Always and in everywhere women should adorn themselves with modesty, propriety and moderation.

For the Ephesian women, the opposite of modesty was braided hair, gold, pearls and expensive clothing. You see, the city of Ephesus was home to the ancient temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, and this temple employed hundreds of temple prostitutes. These prostitutes wore braided hair and gold as part of their working cloth. These prostitutes were infamous throughout the Roman world for their elaborate hairstyles and ornate gold jewelry, so much so that you could identify a prostitute of Aphrodite from a distance just by the way she dressed. Some of the Ephesian women were mimicking the hairstyles and accessories of these prostitutes when they met for worship. Instead Paul said that Christian women should adorn themselves with good works which are consistent with their claim to belong to Christ.

Bible teacher John Stott says "There is no biblical warrant in these verses to suggest that women should neglect their appearance or conceal their beauty or become drab... the question is how they should adorn themselves." [John Stott. *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. Downer's Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1996) p. 83.]

The principle here for women is modesty, for women to enhance their beauty in modest ways. Modesty is simply not dressing in a way that calls attention to yourself, either through seduction or extravagance.

Women's Place In The Church (vv. 11-12)

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. (12) And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”

Verses eleven and twelve introduce an area of great controversy in the church of today. Many believe that it is because of the teachings of Paul that women have difficulty being ordained into the ministry as pastors. Even though he said that in Christ there is no male or female, he still described the criteria for church leadership (pastors) in such male terms (1 Tim 3:1-7) no one else qualified. The apostle Paul also reasoned for male headship, called for submission of wives and required the women to wear head coverings while praying or prophesying in the church. That does sound equal. Some say, No absolutely not!

This is not an absolute prohibition against women teaching! Paul does not say, *“I permit no woman to teach, anywhere, anytime, to anyone, period!”* Paul tells the older women to teach the younger women.

(Titus 2:3-5) “The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—(4) that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, (5) to be discreet, chaste, home-makers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

There are also cases in Scripture in which women taught men, such as when Aquila and his wife Priscilla took Apollos aside and instructed him further in the doctrine of Jesus. (Acts 18:26) “When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

The key to this passage found in the word translated “to have authority over” (v 12). It governs both the teaching and attitude that is to characterize these women. It means *“to domineer or to usurp authority.”* It is not that women are never to teach but that women are not to take over in a church and become the final authoritative teachers. Does this mean then that women are not to be the senior pastor. Yes I believe that it does.

What does Paul mean when he says in verse eleven, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.” The word translated “silent” also occurs in an adjectival form in verse two of this same chapter. There we read that we are to pray for “kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.” The word peaceable is the same word translated “silent” here. In Second Thessalonians 3:12, “Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” Paul uses the same word again. But there Paul is not telling people to work silently but to work peacefully and to not make a big to-do about it.

It would seem that the overall aim of these was to restore peace in the worship service by placing certain limits on the role of women. Probably as a result of the influence of the false teaching, some women had assumed the role of teacher. This step led Paul to invoke a

subordination rule; it seems to have precluded women from teaching men, since to do so constituted a wrongful appropriation of authority over men.

Summation.

When women are in a position as learners they should do so without aggressive reaction.

Women are not limited to ministry only to other women. Although, one certainly should not underestimate the importance of women helping and mentoring other women (Titus 2:3-5)

Women are not to take over in a church and become the final authoritative teachers.