

## “GODLY WOMEN”

## 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Dr. John Crocker, Crossroads Church, Albert Lea, MN. May 1-2, 2010

How do women fit into church life? This has long been a point of contention among Christians.

- How did the controversy begin? We must go back to earliest history. In Genesis 3 we read that when the woman was deceived by the serpent in the garden she disobeyed God’s explicit command, and the man joined her in disobedience. As a result, creation came under a curse. That curse has had a huge impact on both men and women.

The harsh subjugation of women by men is a direct consequence of the curse caused by sin.

- In most cultures throughout history men have been dominant and women have been subservient.

Women had no rights. They were considered the property of men. The way to control women was to keep them ignorant and in bondage to men.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Aristotle taught that women’s liberties should be strictly limited. The Greek culture promulgated this philosophy.

- The repression of women has persisted, even in modern Western society. When the feminist Gloria Steinem was asked why she had not married, she said, ‘I can’t mate in captivity.’ Although she did marry later in life.

In the corporate arena they speak of a “glass ceiling,” a barrier, invisible in official company policies, but nevertheless effective in keeping women from rising to the top executive positions.

‘Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.’ (Charlotte Whitton)

- The uncomfortable truth is that the custom of males ruling over females is a result of sin, and is an effect of the curse on creation. Surprisingly, Roseanne Barr was correct when she said, *Women are cursed, and men are the proof!*

In Genesis 3:16 we see God addressing the woman after her sin, ‘*Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.*’

The Hebrew word for *desire* in that verse means *desire to conquer*. The woman would attempt to usurp the man’s God-given authority given to him at creation.

God said to her, *he will rule over you*. This is the word used for the rule exercised by an autocratic king. It’s an authority that is harsh and abusive.

It was not God’s intention at creation that women would struggle to take charge and that men would be cruel in putting them down.

A consequence of the Fall of mankind was that men abused their authority by treating women harshly.

- God sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to reverse the curse of sin. The Apostle John wrote, ‘*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*’ (1 John 3:8)

This means that by Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and victory on the Cross, women have been emancipated from harsh, despotic male domination.

So Christian wives can submit to their husbands joyfully as to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christian husbands must love their wives sacrificially as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:22-25).

Because of Jesus Christ there is no superiority of males over females.

Paul told the Galatian Christians, *‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’* (Galatians 3:28)

The atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was arguably the greatest boon for women’s rights in history.

Look outside Christendom at the major religions of the world and you will see how wretched life is for women.

· In authentic Christianity the roles of men and women are equal, but not identical.

The man has an authority that goes back to creation, and it transcends the fall of humankind that was caused by sin.

To the Corinthian church Paul wrote: *Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.’* (1 Corinthians 11:3) The man continues to be the head of the woman in an irrevocable sense.

But this is not the kind of authority that “rules over” and suppresses women.

It’s an authority that loves, protects, and serves. It’s like the authority of Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for the church (Ephesians 5:25)

· Let’s look now at what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy about women in the church.

2:8 *I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands without anger or disputing.*

2:9 *I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,*

2:10 *but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.*

2:11 *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.*

2:12 *I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.*

2:13 *For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

2:14 *And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

2:15 *But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.*

Paul’s instruction about the place of women in a church helps us avoid two serious **threats** to a church’s well-being.

## **I. THE DANGER OF DISTRACTION: FOCUS ON GOD’S PURPOSE.**

### **1 Timothy 2:8-10.**

Lee Iacocca is credited with coining the maxim: *‘The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.’* As Chairman of Chrysler he said this back when the superior quality of Japanese cars was scaring the bejeebers out of American Automobile industry leaders. Iacocca insisted that quality had to become the ‘main thing.’

· What is the “main thing,” for a church? The “main thing” is God’s purpose in this world, as that is stated so clearly in what we call the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul has just reminded Timothy exactly that God *desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (2:4).

That’s why Paul urged Timothy to get the church to pray, first of all (2:1), for all people, with specific attention to those in high positions—so that they might be saved.

· If praying for God's will was to have priority in the church, there were issues the men and the women would have to deal with.

Paul addressed the men briefly, then the women in more detail:

2:8 *I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands without anger or disputing.*

2:9 *I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,*

Paul wanted Timothy to make sure that nothing would divert the attention of both men and women from praying for people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

· God created the man and the woman with mega differences that affect just about everything.

Men see only 16 colors. Peach is not a color, peach is a fruit. Salmon is not a color; it's a fish. Men have no idea what mauve is.

The things that are distractions for men are different from women's distractions.

We looked at the men last week. Prayer works for men only if they not hiding unholy thoughts or harboring anger and resentment.

· According to Paul, women struggle with other distractions, like making personal appearance their top priority.

The words, 'dress' and 'modesty' in verse 9 are both forms of the Greek verb, *kosmeo*. It meant to make something orderly, beautiful and attractive

That's where our word *cosmos* comes from. It means the world or ordered universe.

That's also the etymology of the word *cosmetics*. Women use cosmetics to bring order to their appearance.

Clothes are generally more important for women than for men. They dress to impress.

'Girls who dress to kill not infrequently cook that way too.' (O.A. Battista)

Paul didn't tell Timothy to stop the women of the church wearing jewelry or lovely clothes.

· He told them to pay more attention to adorning themselves with the kind of beauty God looks for.

2:10 *but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.*

Each of us must beware of those things in our lives that could easily become the "main thing" and distract us from our devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Both women and men must know the power of these distractions and manage them, otherwise they will manage us.

## **II. THE DANGER OF DECEPTION: GUARD THE TRUTH FROM SATAN'S LIES. 1 Timothy 2:11-15**

Why did Paul write this letter to Timothy? Most Christians would say it's a Pastor's Manual for Church Order.

They point to 3:14-15 where Paul wrote, *'I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.'*

Yes, Paul was very concerned about how people behave in the church. The behavior that concerned Paul most had to do with false teaching.

At the start of the letter, right after his greeting Paul writes, *'I urged you . . . stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain persons not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith.'* (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

He attacks this problem four times in the letter.

Paul's final words at the end of the letter wrap it up: 'Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.' (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

- Frankly, women were at the core of the problem.

No other book in the New Testament devotes so much of its content to problems specifically related to women (See chapters 2, 4, 5)

- Why the women? We rely on informed conjecture.

As we have seen, Christ's redemptive work on the cross forever changed the status of women. In the church a woman became somebody, even though Greek society said she was nobody.

Women had been kept ignorant and told not to worry their pretty heads about anything they didn't understand.

Now they were receiving instruction along with the men. That was highly irregular in a Greek culture.

In their naiveté some of the women were being deceived by lies, by heresy.

This had caused so much havoc in the church that some had wandered away from the true faith (1:6)--both men and women.

- It's against this backdrop that we read what Paul writes about women in the church:

2:11 *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.*

This sounds like a nasty put-down of women. But it's not.

- The word translated 'silence, quietness' here in verse 11 is *hesuchia*. It means the attitude of a serious student.

Because of the dangerous influence of the false teachers, Paul admonished the women to have the teachable and submissive attitude of a serious student. They were to learn the truth, and not be bamboozled by false teaching.

- And what's this about women being submissive, or in subjection?

Having a submissive attitude when the authority of God's truth is presented is required of all Christians, not just the women. But some women especially need this admonition. It did not mean that women are inferior in the church.

2:12 *I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.*

Women in Ephesus were not formally educated. They were not capable of teaching.

Women in western society today have opportunities, privileges, status, and expertise that women in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Asia Minor did not possess.

Paul's statement, *I do not permit a woman to teach* is more accurately translated from the Greek text, 'I am not permitting.'

Paul was specifically addressing the problem of women being deceived by false teachers in Ephesus at that time.

- But someone may point out that in 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 Paul also orders women to remain silent '*Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home. . .*'

Paul was addressing a completely different problem in Corinth.

The word Paul used for silence in the Corinthian situation literally means to be quiet.

We know that the problem in Corinth was women interrupting the worship service to ask questions that their husbands could answer at home. It was very disruptive.

Here in 1 Timothy 2:12 the silence is about learning from teaching, not about asking questions. It's the same word as in verse 11, *hesuchia*—the attitude of a student.

· I believe that what Paul writes here in 1 Timothy 2 or in I Corinthians 14 cannot be used as the biblical basis for a church policy regarding women in leadership or teaching.

The problem in Ephesus was completely different from anything we encounter today, and what Paul wrote has nothing to do with a spiritual gift of teaching.

· If a church limits the teaching role of women, the policy must be based on the responsibility God placed on the man at creation and on the responsibility God placed on pastors and elders to give oversight to his church.

That kind of authority has nothing to do with “ruling over” others. It's an authority expressed completely in the responsibility to love, to protect, and to nurture.

Christian women should never be “ruled over” by a Christian husband or a Christian leader in the church. “Ruling over” or “lording over” or “domineering” is something Christ prohibited, as did the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:3).

There may, however, be situations in which the woman is overruled for her protection by her husband or for her nurture by the pastor or elders of the church.

· There's something else here we must understand. Teaching in the church today it is vastly different from teaching in the early church.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century teaching mostly meant the oral transmission of the Gospel. The teacher was responsible to pass along accurately the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

The gospels were not yet in writing. Church members didn't have their personal copy of the biblical text to verify that the teaching was true. Most of them couldn't even read. That was particularly true of the uneducated women.

Anyone who taught had the awesome responsibility of accurately presenting divine truth to the hearers.

We are not comparing apples with apples when we compare teaching in the church today with teaching in the first century.

So when Paul wrote, *I do not permit a woman to teach*, he had a different kind of teaching in mind from what we envision today (1 Timothy 2:12).

· Let me make another important point about authority.

Personal authority is irrelevant in Christian leadership.

Jesus taught his disciples that to be a leader meant to be a servant. (Mark 10:34-45, et.al.)

Nobody exercises any personal authority when teaching in a church.

In verse 12 Paul said *I do not permit a woman to exercise authority over a man*. Paul didn't use the common word for exercising authority, *exousiazo*. The verb he used is *authentien*, and this is the only place it is used in the New Testament. It's a strong word, meaning undue authority. It meant being authoritarian or domineering.

There was no place for that anywhere in the church. But apparently some of the women were being very forceful in their error.

All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ. All believers equally, both male and female, submit to that authority. People who teach God's word do not have authority; they are under authority.

· Please remember that what Paul wrote about women and authority and teaching was for the purpose of guarding against deception in the church.

2:13 *For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

2:14 *And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

Deception is the only effective weapon in the devil's arsenal. The devil is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

· Paul pointed to what occurred in the Garden of Eden as an example of what was happening in Ephesus.

The women in Ephesus had been deceived and had sinned, much as Eve had been deceived and had become a sinner.

God told the man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15-17). It seems that God gave this command to Adam before creating the woman (Genesis 2:18-25).

But when the serpent tempted her, Eve already knew what God had told Adam (Genesis 3:2-3). Adam must have passed along God's command to her.

It was the woman who was deceived and sinned. Adam was not deceived. But both of them were guilty of sinning.

2:15 *But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.*

Sin had come into the world because the woman had been deceived and had sinned. But God in grace restored women to an honored place. God sent his Son, born of a woman to redeem sinful mankind. (Galatians 4:4)

We must be sure that we view this text in proper perspective. The Apostle Paul was not a misogynist.

In God's design at Creation and in establishing his Church, God has made it clear that he holds men responsible for the protection and care of their wives and of the church.

This responsibility is exercised under divine authority, never under personal authority.

If a church has a policy that restricts the ministry of women in a church, there is nothing in 1 Timothy 2 to support such a policy. They must rely on other texts in Scripture.

The huge issue that prompted this teaching about the role of women in the church is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel was Paul's driving passion. The gospel must be guarded from distortion or dilution, because it is the truth about God's grace and of the only way to be forgiven our sins and to have eternal life.