

Message #5

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1 Timothy

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## THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

### 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15

#### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Francis Schaeffer (PROJECTOR ON--- FRANCIS SCHAEFFER) was a Christian philosopher and apologist and writer. He and his wife spent most of their lives in a place in Switzerland called L'Abri. There they hosted spiritual seekers and doubters, held seminars, and wrote books. He was especially noted for his analysis of culture and history from a Christian perspective. He died in 1984.

The last book which Francis Schaeffer wrote was entitled *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. (THE GREAT EVANGELICAL DISASTER) In it he described his primary concern for the evangelical church. He wrote, **"Here is the great evangelical disaster--- the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. There is only one word for this--- namely accommodation. ...the evangelical church has accommodated to the world spirit of the age."**

Schaeffer argued that this accommodation to the world was happening in his day in several areas. It happened in regard to marriage, the family, abortion, origins of life, and homosexuality. This accommodation followed a certain pattern. **"First,"** he wrote, **"one starts questioning, based upon what the world about us is saying, then one looks at Scripture, then theology, then scientific study--- until finally what the Scriptures teach is completely subjected to whatever view is currently accepted by the world."** A good case could be made that this accommodating spirit within the church has continued on several fronts. The acceptance of homosexual marriage is one example which comes to mind. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Another example is the role of women in the church, the subject of the passage before us this morning. Until the 1900s the teaching of the Christian church was quite consistent on this subject. But in the last fifty or sixty years the view of churches has changed considerably. In 1963 Betty Friedan (BETTY FRIEDAN) published the book *The Feminine Mystique*, which became a milestone in the feminist movement. The following year the Presbyterian Church in the US became one of the first mainline denominations to ordain women as senior pastors. In 1966 the National Organization for Women (NOW)

was founded. Since then the United Methodist Church, most Lutheran synods, the Episcopalians, the American Baptists, and most other mainline Protestant denominations have all come out in favor of having women as preaching pastors in churches. Most of the Pentecostal denominations and the Salvation Army accepted women in this role in even earlier times. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The term egalitarianism is used to describe the idea that women should have the same roles in marriage and the family and the church as do men. The term complementarianism is used to describe the idea that God intended men and women to have different, but complementary, roles in marriage, the family, and the church.

Evangelicals have been a little slower to get on the egalitarian bandwagon. In 1974 a group called the Evangelical Women's Caucus was formed to promote egalitarianism. In 1986 they came out in favor of gay rights. In 1990 they changed their name to the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus. In 2009 they became Christian Feminism Today.

In 1975 Professor Paul Jewett from Fuller Seminary, known as an evangelical institution, wrote *Man as Male and Female*. (PROJECTOR ON--- MAN AS MALE AND FEMALE) He flat out said that the Apostle Paul in our passage today is wrong in his understanding of the proper role of women in the church. (p. 119) Other books by evangelical authors soon followed. By the early 1980s editors at *Christianity Today*, the standard bearer among many evangelicals, had endorsed egalitarian views, that there should be no distinctions made between the roles that men and women have in the local church. (PROJECTOR OFF)

So it would seem that the issue has been pretty much decided--- unless our primary concern is for what the Bible has to say on the subject. If that should be the case, there is no more important passage on the subject than the one before us this morning.

We have seen that the Apostle Paul was writing to his representative Timothy at Ephesus to encourage him to stay on there and correct the false teaching that was being promoted in the church. Chapter 1 was primarily an encouragement to Timothy to hang in there and fight the good fight. Chapters 2 & 3 contain instructions about the proper conduct of the church. In verses 14 & 15 in #3 Paul tells Timothy, **"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 the truth."**

Last week, in the first part of #2, we saw what Paul had to say about the role and priority of prayer in the church, especially prayer for governing officials. Now he goes on to mention the roles of men and women in the church, giving more attention to women's role in the passage before us.

I.

In v. 8 of 1 Timothy #2 (which is found on p. 991 of the black Bible under many of the chairs) the Apostle Paul says that MEN IN THE CHURCH SHOULD LEAD WITH HOLY PRAYERS. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. MEN IN THE CHURCH SHOULD LEAD...) **"I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling..."** Since prayer ought to be a priority, and since we ought to pray for all people, especially people in authority, Paul says that he wants the men in every meeting place of the church to pray.

In the Greek language of the New Testament there are two words for "men." One word is used like our broad use of the English word "men," or "mankind," to refer to all people. That was the word used earlier in our chapter. Here it is the specific word for "males" that is used.

Apparently Paul is expecting the men of the church to take the lead in public prayer. The Apostle does not exclude women from praying out loud in the church meeting. In 1 Corinthians Paul makes reference to women praying in church meetings. But perhaps here he is encouraging the men to take a lead in public prayer.

Praying with hands lifted was the traditional posture of prayer for Jewish men in the temple. But there are other positions for prayer described in the Bible. So I don't know that there is any right or wrong position of prayer. Interestingly enough, praying with one's eyes closed is something that is never mentioned specifically in the Bible. It is also unfortunate that many Christians associate the raising of hands in public worship with only Pentecostal or charismatic worship, because we find a Biblical basis for it right here.

More than the position of prayer, Paul seems to be focusing on the spiritual condition of the pray-er. He wants these men leading in prayer to be in right relationship with the Lord and with other people. In Psalm 66 v. 18 (PSALM 66:18) the author wrote, **"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."**

It is inconsistent to raise hands in prayer if they have just been involved in some way with iniquity. In particular, Paul singles out sin involving anger and quarreling. Perhaps anger and quarreling characterized the false teachers at Ephesus.

II.

The apostle then shifts his attention to the role of women in the meetings of the church. In vv. 9 & 10 he says that WOMEN IN THE CHURCH SHOULD DRESS MODESTLY. (II. WOMEN IN THE CHURCH SHOULD...) He writes, **"...likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works."**

Modesty and decency seem to be the keys. Back in that time a nice dress was considerably more expensive in comparative terms for a woman from an average income family than it is today. A common laborer in the first century was typically paid one denarius a day. Nice dresses could cost as much as several thousand denarii. Ephesus was a wealthy commercial center, which meant that some women could afford them. Many could not.

Ephesus was noted for its temple to Artemis. (EPHESUS TEMPLE ARTEMIS) It has been popularly taught that temple prostitutes were a big part of the worship there. Recent scholarship has discounted that idea. Artemis was regarded as a female hunter and a protector of pregnant women, among other things. At the same time, Ephesus was a large city and a seaport. We know that there was occult activity there and worship of other gods. It was a pagan place. So modesty for women was not necessarily a popular virtue. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Paul singles out braided hair for special mention. Maybe you didn't know that braided hair was inherently sinful. The problem at Ephesus actually was that wealthy women would typically weave expensive jewels into their hair. Wealthy women would show off their status in society by weaving their expensive jewelry into their hair. Their wealth literally went to their heads.

The effect of having immodestly dressed women at church and women with these jewel showcases on their heads was probably not much different than the effect it would have today. One scholar (Towner) says that gold in a woman's hair was associated with high priced prostitutes. All of this would have been disruptive and especially distracting to men. It would have encouraged jealousy and competitiveness and resentment among women. Such behavior and dress revealed a wrong attitude about the purpose

of church meetings. The focus shifted to self rather than to God. Modesty in dress is a reasonable concern in meetings of the church.

Paul says in v. 10 that the biggest adornment should not be clothes and hair but good works. That should be the priority for a woman who professes to worship the true God, who has trusted in Jesus as her Savior. Paul would say that a woman who takes two hours to get dressed but who can't afford five minutes to pray for the needy or to exercise hospitality has wrong priorities.

Paul's statement is very similar to what Peter said in 1 Peter #3 vv. 3 & 4. (PROJECTOR ON--- 1 PETER 3:3-4) There he wrote, **"Do not let your adorning be external--- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear--- but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."**

III.

The part of our passage which many find to be more controversial is vv. 11 & 12. There Paul says that WOMEN IN THE CHURCH SHOULD SUBMIT TO MALE TEACHING AND AUTHORITY. (III. WOMEN IN THE CHURCH SHOULD...) Paul writes, **"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet."** One New Testament professor says, **"Although there are other passages in the PE [Prison Epistles--- 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus] more difficult to interpret, in recent years more has been written on vv. 11-12 than any other passage in the PE."** (Mounce, *1 Timothy*, p. 117)

In terms of our culture Paul's exhortation does not sound politically correct, or even religiously correct, at least among many Christians. In terms of first century culture it did not sound quite as harsh. Women in the Jewish synagogues seemed to have had a quieter role. In the wider Greek and Roman culture women sometimes had more prominence and leadership. Yet it was still a largely patriarchal world.

Christianity and churches were new things in Ephesus and in the Roman world. Women found much liberation through the gospel. Some apparently began to seek leadership and teaching opportunities in the church. Perhaps false teachers were encouraging it. So the question naturally arose about the proper role of women in the church. It is implied also in Paul's discussion that teaching was a major part of the meetings of the early church.

The key word in these two verses is probably “submissiveness.” The original Greek word for it was a military term that means “to rank under.” A higher rank does not necessarily mean greater ability or greater intelligence or greater value. Those of you who have served in the military can probably attest to that. Rank does indicate, however, a certain functional order. In this passage the submission is to be directed toward the teachers, who are men.

This submission is to be demonstrated by quietness, for which there are again two Greek words. One of them means “complete silence.” That is not the one used here. The one that is used means “undisturbed” or “settled down.” It is the same word which appears in v. 2 when Paul speaks of praying for rulers so that Christians can have a “quiet” life. So Paul is not saying that women should never say anything in a church meeting but rather that they are to have a submissive spirit and generally maintain a settled down way of being.

The apostle defines the limits of the woman’s role even more clearly in v. 12. He says, **“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man...”** Often we think of teaching as the communication of certain information or skills. The Biblical understanding of teaching is more than that. The communication of spiritual truths is to involve more than the intellect. It is to involve the will. Spiritual and Biblical truths are expected to affect the way that we live. So the teacher-student relationship involves accountability. The student is expected by the teacher to live in a way consistent with the truths that are taught, assuming of course that those truths are really true and come from God. Paul says that women are not to be in the authoritative position of teacher in the church if that position involves teaching men.

He adds the specific statement that women are not to exercise authority over men--- and again we are talking about a setting within the church, not about how life is to be conducted in the wider world. In the Book of Acts Paul is very appreciative of a Christian businesswoman by the name of Lydia who provides hospitality and helps to get a church started at Philippi.

Paul’s prohibition here goes beyond just teaching situations. He seems to also be warning against women having other church positions that involve a certain authority over men. Applying this principle to all of our church structures today surely involves gray areas. The apostle does not give us specific details, which is probably just as well. But it would seem at the very least that Paul would not approve of female teaching pastors and female elders. That will become more clear in the next chapter.

The final clause in 1 Timothy 2:12 says that the woman **“is to remain quiet.”** The Greek word here is the same as the one used in v. 11, where I said that the meaning is “to be quiet,” or “settled down,” not “absolutely silent.”

Lest someone think that the exhortation here is a “one off,” or an isolated statement of Scripture, we find a similar message in 1 Corinthians #14. (1 CORINTHIANS 14:34) In vv. 34 & 35 Paul writes, **“...the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. (1 CORINTHIANS 14:35) If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”** In the context, Paul is talking about spiritual gifts, some of which involve speaking. So I take it that he is primarily warning against women who have the gift of teaching or encouragement or a similar gift not to be exercising that in the public meeting of the church. Later in 1 Timothy Paul will describe other ministries of the church where women are needed. In Acts we see husband and wife Aquila and Priscilla together teaching and counseling people.

IV.

Let’s look then at vv. 13-15. Here we find that GENDER DIFFERENTIATION IN THE CHURCH IS BASED ON THE CREATION AND FALL. (IV. GENDER DIFFERENTIATION IN THE...) From our twenty-first century perspective we might wonder if Paul was just a product of his early culture. He was also a single guy. Maybe he had some kind of psychological resentment toward women. But then we have to deal with his claim to be an apostle of Christ, and we have to deal with the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible.

It is important to consider his reasoning for this exhortation. He doesn’t base it upon particular circumstances unique to the church situation in Ephesus. He doesn’t base it upon a cultural situation that was unique to that time and place. He doesn’t appeal to tradition. He gives two reasons. The first has to do with the order of creation. He writes in v. 13, **“For Adam was formed first, then Eve...”**

Something about God’s pattern in creation provides a basis for the leadership role of men in the church. In Genesis #1 v. 27 (GENESIS 1:27) the Bible says, **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”** Thus men and women both are created in the image of God. Yet they are different. There is a certain role differentiation. Adam is created first. He is put in charge of the Garden of Eden. He is commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam is given the responsibility to name the animals of creation. He also names Eve. Eve is created as a suitable helpmate for Adam. She is a complement to him. The Apostle Paul sees in this creation order a functional role of leadership that the man is given. (PROJECTOR OFF)

In v. 14 of our passage Paul provides a second reason for the submission of women to male leadership in the church. He finds a basis for it in the Fall. He writes, “...and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” Elsewhere Paul places full responsibility for the Fall upon Adam. But here he stresses the fact that Eve was deceived. If indeed Adam had a leadership function in the garden, the devil was very clever to go to Eve rather than Adam in putting forth his temptation. He was seeking to have Eve make a leadership decision rather than Adam. She made a decision independently of Adam. She did not consult him. She did not submit to his leadership. The result was a terrible tragedy.

Verse 15 is very difficult to understand. It reads, “Yet she will be saved through childbearing--- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” Many interpretations have been suggested, none with great certainty. Perhaps the most common general line of interpretation is that women will have the greatest fulfillment in the salvation life through the experience of bearing and raising children. Women face a temptation to take on the role of men, but that is not where the greatest fulfillment lies. Also in the background is the teaching of the false teachers in #4 v. 3 where we learn that they were forbidding marriage. Perhaps that is partly what Paul is addressing here.

So how do Christians, including those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians, argue against this straightforward reading of the text? A *Christianity Today* editorial some years ago (2/20/1981) said this: “...according to 1 Timothy 2:11 & 12 the apostle is concerned about immature, ill-taught Christians, who, by unskilled and sometimes false teaching, were making the church a helpless prey to heresy. In that specific context he insists that women must not teach.”

That sounds nice, but if the problem was poorly informed teachers presenting wrong doctrine, why does Paul only pick on the women? Were the men immune to this problem? And if you look closely at the passage, Paul in this immediate context does not say that false doctrine is the problem. The problem is that women were teaching men. Then also if the problem was really the teaching of wrong doctrine, it does not make sense that Paul comes up with reasons in vv. 13 & 14 that women should be quiet because of the divine order related to the Creation and the Fall.

Some scholars suggest a second reason why we should reject the complementarian interpretation of this passage because of Paul’s use of the personal pronoun “I” at the beginning of v. 12. Paul is not intending to lay down a universal rule. “I do not permit a woman to teach.” He is just explaining his personal opinion and practice.



The problem with that argument is that Paul often uses the personal pronoun “I” in his letters. His intent in these cases is not to weaken the force of his exhortations. Paul was an apostle. Many of the readers knew him personally. Most of them knew him by reputation. His teaching was intended to be followed.

In v. 8 Paul said, **“I desire then that in every place the men should pray...”** Was that just an expression of his personal opinion, or was he intending that exhortation to carry the weight of apostolic authority? In v. 1 he said, **“...I urge that supplications, prayer, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people...”** Paul uses the personal pronoun “I” in some of the most important doctrinal passages in the New Testament. (PROJECTOR ON--- ROMANS 12:1) In Romans #12 v. 1 he writes, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”** Is this passage somehow less authoritative because Paul is expressing his perspective? (PROJECTOR OFF)

A third line of objection reveals the real crux of the problem. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, who calls herself an evangelical, said that Paul was following the rabbinical interpretation of Genesis #2 & 3 that he learned from Gamaliel, the famous Jewish rabbi. Referring to vv. 13 & 14 in our passage she writes, **“...both arguments flatly contradict one of the New Testament’s clearest and most basic themes: that both male and female believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus.”** In effect, she is saying that Paul is wrong here. She doesn’t like what he says. She sees his statements as being contradictory, and she decides not to believe the apostle’s statement in our passage. So do you see what is happening? It is what Francis Schaeffer warned about when he said that the church is accommodating itself to what is popular and what science or the culture says is right.

Mollenkot is saying that the subordination of women in the church contradicts passages like 2 Corinthians 5:17. (PROJECTOR ON--- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17) There Paul writes, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”** The coming of Jesus reversed the effects of the Fall. Therefore, men and women should have equal roles in the church.

She, and other egalitarians, point also to Galatians #3 v. 28. (GALATIANS 3:28) There Paul says, **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”** Here, they argue, is the defining statement about gender equality in the New Testament. Men and women are equal. They should have the same roles in the church.

Some of these people argue that in 1 Timothy Paul has just not worked out the full implications of his correct theology expressed in Galatians #3. He is simply making concessions to the cultural situation at Ephesus. But here is the thing. Galatians was written in 49 AD, according to most scholars. First Timothy was written about 62 AD. Thirteen years have gone by. The Apostle Paul has not worked out the implications of his own theology? Really?

The bigger problem is that these critics do not understand that equality of value or position before the Lord does not rule out differentiation of roles. The classic example of this is the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most fundamental Christian teachings is that Jesus Christ is equal in value and attributes and worth to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Colossians #2 v. 9 (COLOSSIANS 2:9) says this about Christ: **“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...”**

Yet many times in the New Testament Christ says that He subjected Himself to the Father, or to the Father’s will. In Hebrews #10 v. 7 (HEBREWS 10:7), for example, Christ is quoted as saying, **“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”** Jesus says this to God the Father, and He was equal with the Father. So submission does not necessarily mean inequality.

In fact, in Luke #2 v. 51 (LUKE 2:51) we are told, **“And he [Jesus] went down with them [his parents] and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.”** So does the fact that Jesus was in submission to His earthly parents mean that He was inferior to them? I don’t think so.

Now the common charge is that this traditional notion about the roles of men and women just encourages the abuse of women. (PROJECTOR OFF) The first response to that is that the example that we men are given is Jesus Christ. If we men are following the sacrificial example of Jesus, we are going to be loving the women in our churches and our families with a Christ-like love. We are not going to be mistreating them.

The second response is that an egalitarian view of men’s and women’s roles does not eliminate abuse. Writing in *Christianity Today* a couple of months ago, a scholar by the name of Scot McKnight, who holds to an egalitarian view of gender roles, admitted this: **“It’s not like egalitarianism wipes away abuse, however, for in the Nordic countries, where egalitarianism is the ideology, there is a higher than--- USA, Australia, other European countries--- abuse rate.”** (CT, 7/6/2020)

Some women are better teachers than some men. Some women are smarter than some of us pastors and teachers. Some women are better administrators. But the pattern which the Lord has laid down is that women in the church are to be in submission to male teachers and male church leaders. There are still many other opportunities for service and leadership and exercise of spiritual gifts in the church. There are opportunities for leadership in the secular world. Thank God that we have career women who are making an impact for Christ in the world. Women are by no means second class members of the church.

Catharine Beecher (OVERHEAD ON--- CATHARINE BEECHER) was the oldest child in her family. One of her younger sisters was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Catharine grew up with a great love for children. Her mother also developed in her a great appreciation for the skills necessary to manage a home successfully. At the young age of 23 she founded the Harford Female Seminary (HARTFIELD FEMALE SEMINARY) in Connecticut, which trained women to be successful managers of children and home life.

In 1869 she teamed up with Harriet to write *The American Woman's Home*. In it they wrote, **“Woman’s profession embraces the care and nursing of the body in the critical periods of infancy and sickness, the training of the human mind in the most impressionable period of childhood... and most of the government and economies of the family state. These duties of woman are as sacred and important as any ordained to man; and yet no such advantages for preparation have been accorded her...”** That is perhaps even more the case today. Many seminaries turn out women equipped to lead churches, and there is indeed a place for women on church staffs. But there are few Christian institutions today which provide training for women to manage a household and a family. Given the difficult condition of the family in our society today, we could use more of that training. And too often in our society, we undervalue the contributions of mothers and wives.

The basic underlying problem is that we humans have a tendency to want to be independent. We have this nature that prompts us to do what we want to do when we want to do it. We also live in a culture that encourages this independence. Independence can be good to a certain extent. But it is not good when we are prompted to reject any authority, when we tend to rebel against anybody who tries to tell us what to do. Ultimately the issue is whether we will submit ourselves to God’s authority, whether we are males or females. If we are willing to do that, then the other relationships of life will fall into place.