

Women in the Church

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Salem

1 Timothy 2:8-15

INTRODUCTION:

This morning, I would like for us to go to the Scriptures and consider a topic that has brought a great deal of frustration into the religious world as well as some confusion into the Lord's church as well.

- I am referring to the role of women in spiritual matters.
- It is a topic that is extremely important and certainly affects all of us who are here this morning.
- We may have some that are visiting with us this morning, and although this topic can bring about controversy, I hope that you will enjoy going with us to the Scriptures as we always do when faced with any spiritual question.
- I hope that you will also be encouraged by our practice of taking God's word for what it says.

All of us will agree that the Salem congregation has been incredibly blessed with an abundance of God-fearing women.

- Our women are extremely talented, they are very well-educated, a number have received special recognition for their leadership in the business world, and nearly all of them are genuinely interested in using their talents for the kingdom of God on this earth.

With this in mind, we can look at the Scriptures, and we find that Jesus always treated the women in His life with the utmost kindness and respect.

- In fact, through His teaching, Jesus elevated women to a place of great honor in the Scriptures.
- For example, in **Matthew 1**, even before His birth, we find that there are 5 women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.
- It was unheard of for Jewish men in the First Century to include women in their ancestry.
- But for Jesus, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary, were all mentioned in His genealogy.
- And then, all throughout Jesus' ministry, he paid special attention to the women in His life—all the way through to **John 20**, when Jesus allowed a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first person to see Him after the resurrection.
- We could go on to a number of other examples, but the point is that Jesus in many ways went against the culture of His day and elevated women to a place they did not have in His particular society.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like for us to consider a paragraph of Scripture in **1 Timothy 2**.

- This is one of the two major passages that deal with the limitations on a woman's role in religious matters.
- The first is found in **1 Corinthians 14** and deals specifically with the public worship assemblies of the church.
- In that passage, Paul very clearly says that when the whole church is assembled together, women are to remain silent—specifically, with reference to speaking to the congregation.

In **1 Timothy 2**, however, Paul backs it up a little bit and outlines the role of women in any religious setting when men are present.

- The limitations in **1 Timothy** are not limited to public worship (as they were in **1 Corinthians 14**), but they would also apply to Bible classes, and other get-togethers or situations where prayers might be offered.

This morning, then, I would like for us to study together one of the most comprehensive passages on the role of women in the church—**1 Timothy 2:8-15**. Let's start by noticing what the Bible says...

*8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.
9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,
10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.
11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.
12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.
13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.
14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.
15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.*

As we study these verses together this morning, I would like to divide the lesson into four parts that will hopefully help us understand and remember God's plan for women in the church today.

I. As we look back at these verses, we learn, first of all, in verses 9-10 that WOMEN'S GREATEST BEAUTY IS FOUND IN MODESTY.

Certainly this goes against what many in our culture are saying.

- Our culture wants women to be noticed for how they look.
- The world around us wants us to spend money—lots of money—for expensive clothing, and hair-dos, and plastic surgery, and make up, and jewelry, and all of these things.
- And then, when we see such a woman, we are supposed to react by saying, **“Wow! What a beautiful woman!”**
- Paul, though, says that Christian women are not to be noticed because of these external things.
- As I understand it, the word modesty refers to **“dressing in such a way that does not attract undue attention to oneself.”**

I remember the news from a few years ago when a woman in Florida was selling hot dogs by the side of the road while wearing a white thong bikini. She was eventually arrested because her outfit was creating a traffic hazard.

- Apparently, people were turning their heads to get a closer look, and then crashing their cars as a result.
- One man even rear-ended a police car. That woman was attracting undue attention to herself.

Paul says that Christian women are not to behave in that way, but rather, they are to be noticed for something else.

- In **verse 10**, Paul tells Christian women to adorn themselves with good works.
- When we think of the women of this congregation, therefore, we are to notice them for their good behavior and the good things they do.
- The first thing that comes to mind should not be, **“She has nice hair,”** but rather, the first thing that comes to mind should be, **“What a wonderful Christian woman!”**
- First of all then, Paul tells us that a woman's greatest beauty is found in modesty.

II. As we continue, we find that A WOMAN'S GREATEST ELOQUENCE IS FOUND IN QUIETNESS (Vss 8, 11-12).

Unfortunately, many in the religious world and have ignored these verses.

- I think we all know of congregations where women regularly serve in leadership positions.
- Women are now being used as ministers, and deacons, and song leaders, and are now leading in public prayer.
- Ten years ago, I remember listening to a debate on this topic, and two of the participants were discussing the possibility of women serving as elders.
- At several churches around the state, women are now teaching the adult Bible classes and leading prayers where both men and women are present.
- With this in mind, I think we understand how important it is for us to study this issue this morning.

As we discuss these restrictions in **1 Timothy 2**, I would like to emphasize that Paul is not addressing a secular situation, but rather, his comments are directed to the behavior of women in religious settings.

- Paul had no problem accepting the hospitality of Lydia, the Christian businesswoman in **Acts 16**.
- He could appreciate a fellow tent-maker and business associate like Priscilla, and thanked her when she provided a meeting place for the church in her house.
- In secular settings, I believe our women should be encouraged to follow the example of the worthy woman in **Proverbs 31**—taking care of her family and excelling in the business world.

I can think back to the handful of jobs I had before full-time preaching, and many of my supervisors were women.

- As Christian men, we can encourage the women in our lives to take a leadership role in business and the secular world.
- However, the Bible does give some limits in religious matters.

That brings us to **verse 8**.

- We find here that men, and not women, are to lead prayers when both Christian men and women are present.
- The word that is translated here as “**men**” in **verse 8** literally refers to “**men**” or “**males.**”
- Sometimes, in some translations of the Bible, you may recall that the term “**man**” or “**men**” is used in a generic sense and refers to both men and women.
- When that is the case, the Greek word behind the translation is “**ANTHROPOS,**” which literally refers to humankind, or mankind in general.
- This would include both men and women.
- However, the word that is used in **verse 8** refers specifically to “**males.**”
- The original word is the plural form of “**ANER,**” not “**ANTHROPOS.**”
- So what does it mean when Paul specifically says that males are to pray?

We know from other passages that women can pray.

- They can pray whenever they want to pray.
- In fact, women can even pray in a public place.
- This morning, hopefully, our women were praying during the opening prayer.
- Obviously, then, there is some kind of special praying that Paul is talking about here that men can do and women cannot do, and when we consider the context of **verse 12**, we see that he must have been referring to the leading of prayer in the presence of Christian men.

Remember, if Paul had wanted to tell both men and women to pray in this way, he could have very easily used the term “**ANTHROPOS.**”

- In fact, he already used this term in **verses 1 and 4** of this chapter, and in those verses, he obviously meant both sexes.
- So, why did he change words when he got down to **verse 8**?

- The only answer that will work is to say that Paul intentionally wanted to make a distinction between mankind in general and males specifically.

We can go on to **verse 11**, and we find that the restriction on women in religious settings is not limited to prayer.

- In **verse 11**, we find that women are to *“quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.”*
- First of all, when it comes to learning, women are to learn *“quietly.”*
- The word that is used here generally means, *“in a quiet manner.”*
- It does not refer to absolute silence.
- It is related to the word that is used in **verse 2** where Paul refers to a *“quiet life.”*

Secondly, though, women are to learn with *“entire submissiveness.”*

- The word translated here as *“submissiveness”* literally means, *“to rank under.”*
- Anyone who has served in the military knows that rank has to do with order and authority, not necessarily with value or ability.
- A colonel may be higher in rank than a private, but that does not mean that the colonel is a better person.
- It only means that he has a higher rank and has more authority in military matters.

One thing we may overlook here is the obvious and revolutionary fact that women are to *“receive instruction”* in the first place!

- We can think to the situation in Afghanistan and other parts of the world where women are forbidden even to learn.
- Again, this was a revolutionary idea and it cannot be overlooked.
- It says something about the importance of all of us—even the women—being involved in the Bible classes here at this congregation.

There is another restriction on women’s role in religious matters in **verse 12**—a key verse.

- We are told by Paul that women are not allowed to either teach or exercise authority over a man, but are to remain quiet.
- The two ideas (teaching and exercising authority) are both modified by the phrase, *“over a man.”*
- Women are allowed to teach and exercise authority, but in religious matters, it must not be done *“over a man.”* That is the limiting factor.

Unfortunately, the KJV has created some confusion when it comes to **verse 12**.

- It says that women must not *“usurp authority over the man.”* That is a little bit misleading.
- Some people have taken the word *“usurp,”* and have said that if a man gives a woman the authority to preach or be an elder, then that is okay—as long as she does not usurp (or take) the authoritative position on her own.
- The problem is, that is not the meaning of the word translated as *“usurp.”*
- That argument is based on an inaccurate and unfortunate translation.

Closely related to this argument, though, is a very true statement—**“There are more men who abandon their responsibility to lead than there are women who forcibly take that authority away.”**

- In many cases, that is very true.
- That means for those of us as men, when the Bible says that women are not to exercise authority over us, we ought to provide such a high quality of leadership that women will never even feel the need to lead.
- As men, we cannot be lazy in our leadership of the church.
- And so, **verse 12** has a profound lesson not only for the women, but also for the men as well.

Naturally, since these restrictions are so foreign to our culture, there will be many objections, and some of them can be very creative.

- Some have said, “**According to Galatians 3:27-28, there is neither male nor female in Christ; therefore, there should be no distinctions between the roles of men and women.**”
- However, very few would take this application to its logical end.
- For example, after becoming Christians, do women become fathers and men become mothers?
- No, they do not. Instead, due to their relationship with Christ, men and women can approach God on the same level.
- As far as their roles are concerned, men become better fathers, women become better mothers, and so on.
- Men and women are different, they are equally valuable to God, and yet they do have different roles in the Lord’s church.

Other people will object by saying, “**But this is only a ‘devotional.’ We are not really having a worship service—so that means women can lead prayers and preach and lead the singing.**”

- What is a devotional? That word is not found anywhere in the Bible.
- I searched for the word “**devotional**” in the Bible we have on the computer, and the computer threw up a screen at me that said, “**SEARCH ERROR.**”
- That word is not found in the Scriptures, and it is certainly not a clever loophole in God’s plan for women in the church.
- Whether we are sitting around a table in a classroom, or singing at a youth rally, or sitting around a campfire, if we are involved in a spiritual activity, we are bound by these restrictions in **1 Timothy 2.**

III. As we move on, I would like for us to consider a third great lesson from this paragraph, and that is, THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH IS TIED TO CREATION (verses 13-14).

One of the greatest and most popular arguments for an expanded role of women in the church today is that Paul’s instructions were merely cultural, and therefore no longer apply to us in the church today.

- Some preachers and church leaders seem like they are saying that if we do not have a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology, then there really is not very much of the New Testament we can understand!

The argument is that Paul wrote this letter to the young preacher Timothy in Ephesus, and that if Paul were to write to Salem, IL, his instructions would be completely different, because our culture is different.

- Several months ago, someone gave me a copy of several memos that an area congregation’s elders had given to its members as they made the proposal to appoint women as deacons, and as they made the argument for women to be allowed to teach the adult Bible class on Sunday mornings.
- Their reasons for making those changes were very clearly laid out in those documents.

One of the first reasons they gave was this: “**Women and girls represent the larger portion of our Congregation, substantially outnumbering the number of men and boys.**”

- Is that the reason Paul gave in **1 Timothy 2** for limiting the role of women?
- Did Paul say that the men outnumbered the women and were therefore put in a place of leadership?

Another reason was this: “**[Our congregation] is blessed with a substantial pool of talented, capable and accomplished women, many of whom are also quite well-educated in both the Church and the secular world—a pool which is in fact larger than the pool of similarly qualified men.**”

- Is that the reason Paul gave for limiting the role of women in Ephesus?
- Were the men smart and the women stupid, and now, 2000 years later, the situation has merely been reversed? In fact, did Paul say anything about talent or ability or education in **1 Timothy 2**?

Let's notice again that in **verses 13-14**, these instructions are **TIED TO CREATION**.

- That is the one thing that I would like for us to remember about the special role of women in the church today.
- The role of women is **TIED TO CREATION**, and no matter what the culture was in the First Century, and no matter what the culture is in the city of Salem, the restrictions on women in the church are **TIED TO CREATION**.
- Back at the creation, there was no culture. Paul was tying his instruction to a cultureless culture—right back at the very beginning of the human race!

I find it interesting that in all four New Testament passages that give limitations on male and female roles, creation is given as the reason in every one!

- All of them are **TIED TO CREATION**. In **1 Corinthians 11**, in **1 Corinthians 14**, in **Ephesians 5**, and again here in **1 Timothy 2**, creation is given as the reason.

It is interesting that some have also tried to justify abortion and homosexuality on the basis of a changing culture.

- We could apply the same reasoning to divorce for any reason and living together before marriage—all of these are issues that are now accepted in our society.

And so, when we are told that these verses on the role of women can merely be dismissed as being tied to the culture of the day, it all gets down to a very basic question: Do we conform to the culture around us, or do we believe that God knows best—even when His word is offensive to our culture?

- If we are guided by modern culture, we will eagerly look for loopholes as we desperately seek acceptance by the world, but if we are guided by God's word, our path into the future is clear.

IV. With all of this in mind, we come to **verse 15. We learn from **verse 15** that A WOMAN'S GREATEST FULFILLMENT COMES THROUGH MOTHERHOOD.**

This does not mean that salvation is conditional upon having children (as some unfortunate translations seem to put it), but it means that as a general rule, women will find their most rewarding place in God's plan by filling the role of wife and mother in this life.

SUMMARY:

This morning we have learned that...

- Women's greatest beauty is found in modesty.
- Women's greatest eloquence is found in quietness.
- Women's role in the church is tied to creation.
- Women's greatest fulfillment is found in motherhood.

CONCLUSION:

This morning we need to celebrate all of the many things that women can do in the Lord's church.

- First of all, this congregation will never have elders or deacons without godly women—elders and deacons must be married.
- Right now, many of our women regularly bear the responsibility of preparing the communion.

- A number of ladies have helped with the cleaning of this building and the maintaining of this facility.
- Concerning funerals, the men preach the service and lead the singing, but the women are the ones who normally reach out with their hearts much better than we can as the men of the congregation.
- The women here are the first ones to think about sending flowers, and hosting a luncheon, and bringing food to the family.
- On several occasions, women have influenced their husbands and their children to obey the gospel.

INVITATION:

As men and women in the world today, we have several terrifying things in common.

- All of us sin, all of us deserve to die because of our sins, and all of us depend on Jesus Christ for our salvation.
- Jesus died for all of us, and all of us come to Christ on the same terms.
- We come to have faith in God. We change our lives.
- We allow ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism, at which point our sins are washed away.
- If you would like to be saved this morning, you can let us know as we stand and sing...