

Men and Women, Part II

Call to Worship: Psalm 25:1-5

Hymn #128- *Hail Thou Once Despised Galilean King*

1st Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Hymn #17 (supp)- *Blessed Assurance*

2nd Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Hymn Insert- *Power of the Cross*

Introduction:

In providing Timothy with a blueprint for proper church life and order, we have considered Paul's first exhortation for the brethren to pray for all types and classes of people; those in high positions of authority (kings, rulers, governors...etc) as well as those among the other general classes. Praying particularly for those in governmental positions is warranted, for both, the peace and wellbeing of the church, as well as the salvific need of every human being, since there is only one Mediator between God and man, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Following this, we began to consider Paul's next few exhortations, which address the roles of men and women in the church. And there, we found the charge for men especially, to gather together to pray, without wrath or doubting, and for women to adorn themselves modestly in keeping with their profession of godliness, with good works. And, we found that, contrary to our culture and our natural, fallen disposition, God, who delights in the inner man (and is not impressed by outward appearances), designed the woman in such a way that her true beauty would be displayed by a gentle, quiet, submissive spirit, which ought to be reflected in her outward dress and attitude.

This morning, we continue on with this theme, and see how this general attitude, ordained by God for women, is further reflected in the role that women are called to fill, in the context of Christ's glorious church. We've already started across the bridge from outward dress to biblical role, by touching on verse 11, last time. And this morning then, we'll move into verses 12-15.

"Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (vs. 11-15).

For the sake of clarity and order, we will divide this text into three parts:

- 1) The *impermissible* role of women in the church (vs. 11-12)
- 2) The foundation of this impermissible role (vs. 13-14)
- 3) The general role of women in the church (vs. 15)

I. The *Impermissible* Role of Women in the Church (vs. 11-12)

In addressing the role of women in the church, Paul begins by first speaking about what role women are *not* permitted to fill. In other words, while people may be free to do certain things in life; while there are often, options in life, concerning many things (careers, living locations, clothing preferences, furniture...etc), within the life of Christ's church, in accordance with the will and purpose of the Head of the church (Christ), women are not to "teach or have authority over a man." In fact, consistent with the glorious design of the Creator, who has determined the beauty of a woman to be set in the heart of a gentle, submissive and quiet disposition, Paul states, that a woman is to "learn in silence with all submission" (vs. 11). And again, he repeats "to be in silence" in verse 12, contrasting the idea of teaching or exercising authority over a man. And so, for the moment, simply note the consistency between the dress, attitude and impermissible role of women. All of them are contra "noisy, showy" and demanding any form of attention. And all of them are pro "quiet, gentle and submissive."

Now, all of that said, it is important to consider what exactly Paul means and doesn't mean by this command, because obviously, at face value, this can seem quite extreme, can't it? Honestly, I cringe at repeating the term "silence" when speaking of woman, because I realize that it can appear to be chauvinistic. And so, so as to avoid being labeled a Ralph Kramden, let me explain what I believe Paul is *not* saying, before getting to what I believe he is saying.

1) I don't believe that Paul is saying that a woman is not permitted to teach a man in all settings. Now, what do I mean by this? I mean, at the least, keeping the context in mind, Paul is speaking within the confines of the gathered assembly, or the local church, and that, most particularly, during the worship service. And so, Paul is not saying that women cannot be

college professors or those who might be called to instruct men about any given secular field of study. This is the blueprint for life *in the church* here.

2) While there are differences of opinion about women taking governmental positions and exercising authority over a man (in that sense), again, I don't believe that *this text* can be used to speak for or against women being appointed into government positions. And so, that battle, which I am not going to address here, cannot be won or lost by this text. [Nor is Paul saying, in this text, that a woman cannot hold a management position in the workforce...etc]. Suffice it to say, that, the role of women in the secular realm is another whole animal, which is not dealt with here...at least in my estimation.

3) Paul is not saying that women cannot partake in evangelistic or even missionary endeavors to some extent. From the evangelistic standpoint, women are certainly called to share the gospel with others, including men (provided they are able to do so, safely, and without risking the possibility of opening themselves up to sexual sin--- adultery, fornication...etc. Even with men, whenever dealing with the opposite sex, we need to be very careful, and we would do well to ensure that we are not alone with the opposite sex, lest our godly endeavors become tarnished by gross sin, if some kind of sexual temptation arises). [The woman at the well]

Regarding missionary endeavors, there have been wives, who have accompanied their husbands onto the mission field, even assisting them to some extent with their labors (Priscilla and Aquila teach and correct Apollos). There have also been women, who have served as nurses, doctors...etc, who have been used to bring the gospel to tribal peoples throughout the world, as they served them medically...without becoming a pastor or leader in a local church plant that springs out of such labors.

4) I don't believe that this precludes women from being involved in any mixed Bible studies. While I do believe it would affirm that women ought not to lead mixed Bible studies, I don't believe that it necessarily means that women cannot speak at Bible studies, asking questions or making comments...etc. And furthermore, women (as well as men) are given the same "encourage one another," "rebuke/correct one another," "speak the truth to one another in love," "sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to one another"...etc, type commands that are given throughout the New Testament. In other words, there are many vocal responsibilities,

which when commanded in Scripture, nowhere indicate that such commands are relative only to a specific gender. They are general commands to the church, given to all members, male and female alike. [Even Philip's daughters prophesied in some sense]

5) I don't believe that Paul is here forbidding women to teach, even within the context of life in the church, when that teaching is done to other women or children. This command deals specifically with women adopting a submissive role and not exercising authority over or teaching men.

6) Even in the gathered assembly, when the church meets for corporate worship, such as we are doing here this morning, I don't believe that Paul is saying that women cannot say a single word throughout the entire duration of time that we are in the sanctuary. In other words, women do not have to be absolutely silent from the moment they enter this room, until the moment they leave the room. And believe it or not, yes, I have heard of rare occasions where that actually takes place in churches.

And so, these are just a handful of things that I don't believe Paul is saying here. That said, let me now address what I believe Paul is saying here.

Very clearly, Paul is saying that a woman cannot take on the position of a pastor/elder/overseer/preacher. That ought to be clear, although sadly, today, people try to whitewash the obvious away, by stating that this was a cultural limitation for that specific time period. That argument will be put to rest in a moment. Keeping in mind that Paul is about to address the qualifications for overseers, clearly he is preparing to do that, first, by showing that such an office is not to be filled by a woman. The pastoral ministry is a ministry that is laden with teaching (private and corporate), preaching and authority. And so, there is no doubt that, at the very least, Paul is here limiting the office of elder to qualified men only.

That said, it is the "speaking/silence" element that requires careful addressing here, isn't it? Where is Paul going with the "learning in silence with all submission," and to "be in silence" aspects of this command? I believe that our first Scripture reading, from 1 Corinthians 14, can help us work toward resolving this dilemma. [Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40]

Here, we find Paul addressing a problem of significant disorder that is taking place among the Corinthians, when they gather together for worship. Apparently, there was a chaotic

flow of individuals constantly jumping up and speaking, during the gathered assembly, and it was creating confusion, rather than serving to edify the brethren. Some were speaking revelations, some were speaking prophecies in foreign tongues (without having an interpreter interpret them, so that the words could actually benefit the hearers), others were speaking psalms or teachings...etc. All in all, there was a lot of people seeking to exercise their gifts, but they were doing so, out of a desire to use and show off their gifts, rather than with the intention of edifying the body by those gifts, which is the reason those gifts were given to begin with. And so, the gathering became a conclave of noise, rather than an orderly means of edifying one another and growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, Paul gives important instructions here, so as to humble the brethren, while calling them to do things decently and in order. With that said, let me highlight a few important points here.

1) It is important to realize that the early church did not have a New Testament Canon. And because of this, and also as a means of authenticating the message of the apostles of Jesus, prophesying was apparently common and abundant. In fact, the promise from Joel 2, about the time coming when your sons and daughters will prophesy (at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit), was fulfilled at Pentecost, according to Peter (Acts 2:14-21). And so, prophesying, or speaking words from God, was something that was gifted to various individuals (men and women) for the edification of the church, especially in this period of transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, during the time of the early church (the laying of the foundation of the church).

Now, it is also important to realize that speaking in tongues (or actual foreign languages that were not naturally learned) was a form of prophesying, only in a foreign language, used as a sign for the early church. In fact, Paul says that it is more preferable to prophesy than to speak in tongues, mainly because, if you speak in tongues, you need the additional help of an interpreter (someone gifted with the gift of interpretation), to translate the message into the common language of the people. In a nut shell, speaking in tongues, plus the interpretation of those tongues, equals prophesy.

2) All of that said, second, it is important to realize that the early church, not having a NT, and making use of revelatory gifts, clearly conducted themselves in their corporate gatherings, a

little differently than we do today. Now, what do I mean by this? Yes, they had preaching and hymn singing and a time of prayer...etc. But apparently, they also committed at least a portion of their services to allowing people to stand up to give a prophetic Word from God. And you'll notice that Paul doesn't forbid that. In fact, he gives them instructions on how to conduct themselves during such times, right here in our text. The problem wasn't that they were allowing this to take place during the gathered assembly, but rather, it was how they were conducting themselves when doing it. The disorder was ungodly.

3) It is within this context that Paul uses the word "silent/silence" a few times in this text, once addressing women. Notice verses 27-28. Notice verses 29-30. And then finally, verses 34-35.

And so, clearly, it is within this context of disorder, with a practice that was common in a setting where prophesying was going on, and where Paul is attempting to bring order, that Paul calls for silence in these different ways. And, it is in this setting, at least in Corinthians, that Paul is stating firmly that the women are not to speak at all (even to the extent of asking questions) during the gathered time of worship.

Now, keeping all of this in mind, let's get back to our text in Timothy, and work toward a conclusion. Remember, Paul is speaking to Timothy, urging him to speak to the Ephesians, as he has been sent there to help bring that church to the place of God-honoring stability. False teachers were adding to the law of God, fables were being taught, genealogies were being misused...in short, doctrinal disaster was ensuing, and Paul provided this blueprint to counteract it and bring order. Corinth, as we have just seen, was suffering from its own fair share of chaos and division, as people were selfishly abusing their gifts, being unconcerned with edifying the body, which was the very purpose for why Christ gave these gifts to the church. And clearly, the freedom that women had, in teaching and speaking during the gathered assembly, added, perhaps even significantly, to this problem.

And so, brethren, with all of this in play, my suggestion is that the "silence" emphasis, which Paul gives here, concerning women in the church, is primarily dealing with what takes place during the worship service. Now, while we no longer have people standing up to prophesy

anymore (we have a completed NT Canon), at the least, we can make three main, conclusive statements here.

A- Women should not be appointed to the office of an elder/pastor, because they are not to have authority over men. Rather, they are to be submissive in their demeanor.

B- Women ought not to preach, lead the service or be put into a position where they are called to teach, in the context of the gathered assembly. Rather, they are called to remain quiet/silent, in accordance with the design of God. And even the dress is to compliment this design, as we saw last time.

C- I do believe that there is a general principle of women not teaching or exercising authority over a man in other religious settings as well...such as *leading* a mixed Bible study.

II. The foundation of this impermissible role (vs. 13-14)

Very quickly then, what is the foundation that Paul gives for this impermissible role?
[Read verses 13-14]

Here, we find two reasons, that Paul gives, explaining why women are not to exercise authority over or teach men. And both of these reasons compel us to realize that this overall command is transcultural and transtemporal. In other words, it applies to all culture and all periods of history.

1) Adam was formed first, and then Eve. What does Paul mean by this? Namely, that the man, being formed first, has been given a position of authority over the woman. Again, this is not a matter of value, so much as it is a matter of position. God created man first, to lead. And in the case of Adam and Eve, Eve was created to be a helpmate to Adam, as he sought to exercise dominion over the earth. [We note that Adam named all of the animals, and Eve, for that matter]

This first point, dealing with the issue of authority, leads to the second point, dealing with the issue of not teaching/preaching, and of remaining silent.

2) Paul states in verse 14, that Adam was not deceived by the serpent, but Eve was, leading her to transgress God's command. And what then is Paul's point here? Namely, that the woman, having been deceived by the serpent, is more susceptible to being deceived, which is a significant danger, when taking on the position of a preacher or a teacher of men. Now, notice

what Paul is *not* saying, is that "Adam did not sin," when he ate of the forbidden fruit. In fact, in many ways, Adam's sin was worse, because Adam sinned with eyes wide open. In other words, he knew very well that, by listening to his wife, he was rebelling against God. But, Eve was actually deceived by the serpent, falling into the trap of his lies.

And so, for these two foundational reasons (the first, a pre-fall reason even), Paul avows that a woman is not to take on the position of an elder/pastor, and she is not permitted to teach/speak at the gathered assembly.

III. The general role of women in the church (vs. 15)

Finally then, Paul moves on from the impermissible role of women, to the general role that women ought to fill in the church.

"Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (vs. 15).

Now, what is Paul saying here, as he flips from the impermissible to the permissible role of women in the church? That women can only be saved if they bear children? Of course not. That women are saved by bearing children? Of course not. Rather, as a general principle, he is stating that a woman's primary role in the church, rather than seeking a position of leadership or a preaching/teaching role, is to be faithful in the very difficult work of bearing and raising our next generation of Christ followers.

In essence, and in keeping with the context, a woman is most pleasing to God, behind the scenes, when she bears and rears children, works with her hands, and presents herself with a quiet and submissive demeanor. Notice again, the attitudes of the heart, being brought out here. If she continues in faith (if her trust in and love for God, continues to drive her life and actions), in love (in her selfless desire to serve God by sacrificially serving the brethren), and holiness (in her standing out from the demands of the culture, pursuing a life of godliness in the fear of God), with self-control (in her restraining herself from coveting the attention that the world desires, in her zealous desire to faithfully represent and glorify Christ, and in her striving to refrain from entertaining the lusts of the flesh).

Now brethren, not every woman is called to bear children, or even to be married, for that matter (Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians). But, I think the general principle is beaten into the ground here, isn't it? The woman that is pleasing to God; and the woman who glorifies God, is not coveting the attention of others. Her inward disposition of godliness is manifest in an outward attitude of quietness, gentleness, discreetness and submission, not unlike the helpmate which Eve was called to be for Adam, or Sarah, who called Abraham lord (out of respect for his headship and authority), refraining from pushing to compete with men (by coveting leadership/teaching positions in Christ's body).

Such a woman is grossly offensive to the world, but such a woman bears the feminine mark of her Creator, and is therefore, well pleasing to her God. And men, rather than disrespect or take advantage of such women, we ought to love and cherish and esteem them highly!

Amen!!!

The Lord's Supper!