

I Timothy 2:1-10 (Part II)

By
Pastor Nam Park

July 24, 2005

Copyright © 2006 Immanuel Bible Church.

All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Version (1977) unless otherwise noted. This file has been edited from the original audio recording and may be freely copied, printed out, and distributed as long as copyright and source statements remain intact, and that it is not sold. All rights reserved.

A copy of this sermon can be obtained by contacting IBC's Audio Ministry or Daniel Park

"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *borne* at the proper time. And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness."

Introduction

Gather around the Scriptures with me now as we turn over to 1 Timothy Chapter 2. We are going to look just at verses eight to ten. It is a bridge (and a very appropriate bridge) that takes us from this whole concept of corporate evangelistic prayer to the whole concept of what it means to be a teacher and who can be teachers. Chapter 3 will discuss what the qualifications of the teachers are as well as the other church leaders.

So what we have here is a transition from chapter 1 where Paul establishes what is going on in the church at Ephesus. He reminds Timothy their purpose that *"the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"* (1 Timothy 1:5). In other words, he has laid out for Timothy the philosophical basis by which we do ministry. We desire to see people's hearts change; that they might walk in godliness. That's his whole intention Timothy's entire purpose in ministry. So Paul's says to Timothy "I've left you at Ephesus so that you might teach some of these to stop blaspheming, to stop speaking of the things of the Lord as if they were based on some kind of genealogical mystery; as if there is some deeper logic, or some deeper mystery, some Gnostic ritual that is necessary for us to become closer to God."

Gnosticism is rooted in paganism. It's this idea that there are "the haves" and "the have-nots." There are individuals that know certain secrets and because they know those secrets, they are more holy. It is this arrogant attitude that says there are different types of individuals as they approach God: those that are holier than you; and you. You need to try and learn how to become more holy and do all these things by a secret knowledge that can be attained. All of that in the end is just human religion. It's just human religious rigor. It's what we do, what we know, what we in ourselves have accomplished that makes us a little better. Paul is saying teach these men (apparently these men were leaders in the church, elders in the church) to stop blaspheming. Teach them to stop dwelling on such trivial issues.

Paul says that ought to be instead a priority placed on those things which were important in establishing the church. He says, *"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men."* This is what the public worship service should entail. This should be the corporate body gathering together for prayer—to pray for the evangelization of the lost, to pray that salvation and the grace of God might overflow, and in general, to pray on behalf of all those that are "called" in the entire world, particularly those that are in authority. That God might allow us to continue to minister, to continue to graciously exist, and to continue to propagate the gospel as freely as possible.

We are to pray for our governments, for our leaders, even if we do not agree with everything they do. We are to pray for them and uphold them highly because God has sovereignly placed them in position of authority over us. That's how the Christian church ought to be. And it speaks of God's desire for all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and to be saved. And how God's desire is that men and women would know the gospel and know salvation and receive that which is the ransom paid by Jesus Christ on our behalf.

It's in that context that Paul continues on and talks about how a man should conduct himself in public worship and how ladies are to conduct themselves in regard to corporate worship, as well. The central concept here is the corporate worship service. Note that in verse 1 of chapter 2 that *"prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings"* are all in the plural form. It suggests to us that it is our corporate or pluralistic prayers together, and not just my private prayers on my own. We are to

pray as individuals, but this is the corporate community that we are addressing. And so keep that in mind as we look at the verses today and with the subsequent verses, whether they are about the qualification of teachers, the qualifications of elders, or deacons. These things all fit within that same context of what happens in the corporate worship service. So let's pray and ask that the Lord instructs us in this time, as we gather around the Scriptures. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for this morning. We thank you for just the blessing of being able to meet here together with brothers and sisters in the Lord, to gather around your holy Word.

We pray Lord that you would by the power of your Holy Spirit, take the Word of God, and that you would humble our hearts enough that we might see the goodness of the things of the Lord.

Help us, Lord, because often we blind ourselves; because there are so many things that distract our minds. In this moment Lord, help us to have clarity, help us to receive insight as Paul describes.

May our eyes, the eyes of our hearts, be open so that we might see and receive that which the Lord God would teach us this morning. And may it change us and cause us to walk in greater righteousness and a deeper desire to know you more.

We thank you for the blessing of you, and all of your grace that we might walk in holiness.

*We pray these things in Jesus name,
Amen.*

Paul says we are to corporately gather together and pray for the world. Let us first address the men and then in verses nine and ten, let us address the women.

Men's Approach to Prayer (v. 8)

“Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.”

Here is a command by Paul that they ought (that all men should desire more than anything) to come into the place of worship to pray. That is the command of Paul and the reason why I call it a command (if you look at least the NAS translation it almost sounds like it is more of an issue of his opinion or his declared desire) is because this is the same Paul, who has just finished establishing his authority just one verse earlier. Look at verse seven, it says *“for this I was appointed as a preacher and as an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”* He establishes apostolic authority in just a few words.

He says *“I want men in every place to pray.”* Why does he do that? He does that because it is not just his own desire. It is not an issue of his own personal opinion. This is Paul who just addressed his apostleship and the authentic nature of the authority that he possesses as an apostle of Jesus Christ. There are not many apostles. Right? There are no apostles today. The word “apostles” is not a term for us. We can call ourselves “disciples” of Christ and “disciples” of the Lord. That's appropriate because all who followed Christ were considered disciples. But apostles, those were particular individuals that were sent by God with a unique authority to do all manner of things, including the authority to say “Thus saith the Lord” in much the same way the Old Testament prophets use to say “Thus saith the Lord.”

When Paul establishes his authority as an “apostle,” it's a significant thing. This should color our interpretation of his commands in verses 8-12: *“I want men in every place to pray... likewise I want women to adorn themselves... let a woman quietly receive instruction... I do not allow a woman...”* When he uses the first person in all of these particular declarations, we need to understand that these are not his personal insights or opinions. He is coming to us as an apostle saying *“I'm telling the truth.”* In other words, this has been validated because of his apostleship. In essence, he is saying, “Let all the saints of all the churches bear witness that I am an Apostle (and I do not lie about such an authority) and based on that authority, may we understand these things.” Thus, he expresses more of a command than any kind of an opinion.

The term for “men” here in the Greek is *anēr* (άνήρ), which is different from the term that we would often find for “man” or “mankind”, which in the Greek is *anthrōpos* (άνθρωπος). In today's English, “anthropology” is the study of mankind. When the Greek uses *anthrōpos*, it frequently speaks of “men” or “man.” It could be used to specify the male gender or it could mean mankind as a whole. *Anthrōpos* was used earlier in 1 Timothy 2:1 when it says *“that we ought to pray on behalf of all men.”* But here, that term is not being used. It's *anēr* and it is that gender specific term. In other words, you don't speak of *anēr* or use that term to speak of mankind because it speaks specifically to the males of our species. It is to men only. In fact, this same word is either (depending on the context) translated “men” or “husbands.” This is significant because this same term will be used in 1 Timothy 3:1 where it says *“It is a trustworthy statement that if any man aspires to the office of overseer.”* If the “overseer” or the office of the bishop or the elder were intended to be served by men or

women, you would expect Paul to use the word *anthrōpos*. But instead, the gender specific word *anēr* is used. Paul says "I want the men to have this mentality in every place."

When he says "**every place**," he doesn't mean everywhere you go walk around with holy hands. The idea here is that any place that there is a public gathering together for worship amongst the community of believers, any church or any other corporate gathering, he wants the men to pray in the corporate gathered community. He's saying the emphasis is not just on our corporate prayer which we need to do, but it's on our corporate prayer led particularly by men.

Gentlemen, (let me speak to the men in this congregation here) if we do not prepare ourselves adequately for the worship service, then we come and we fail in terms of God's designed role for us. What I mean by that is that Paul's apostolic authority leads to us this decree: "men in every place;" wherever there is a community of believers gathered corporately, they need to come and pray. And if you, as men particularly, have not come with an attitude of prayerfulness and a desire to worship and seek your God, to hear the Word of God spoken, if that is not your heart, then you have come to hear a show. You have come because of habit. You have basically disdained the very things that make up your purpose as men. God has designed us and He has desired for us to lead in spiritual things. So, when there is a corporate gathering for the community of believers, we, as men, should gather there with an intense desire to come together in a prayerful attitude of worship. Notice that this is a universal decree. In *any* place that there's a gathering together of believers, *any* public congregation, the men ought to come with a particular intention to lead in prayer. That is a blessing.

The question then arises if this will exclude women from praying. No, not necessarily. 1 Corinthians 11:5 says, "*But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.*" This verse talks about the whole issue of the appropriate dress and conduct when a woman is praying or prophesying within the context of the congregation. It assumes that she would be praying or prophesying. The idea of the women participating in prayer is in the context of the corporate gathering or from the pews, if you will. Later on, Paul says explicitly in 1 Corinthians 14:34 "*Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says.*"

Now, when you hear or read something that sounds like that I know it raises your natural hackles (i.e. hairs on the upper back and neck). It raises mine. Because we have been trained to think that that's not right; you can't tell people not to speak. Of course we can! The Scriptures can speak to us in any manner that it desires. But more importantly, even some men are not all allowed to speak just because they are men. When it says "let the women keep silent," it doesn't refer to the idea that they need to they can't sing, pray, or talk; or that as soon as they come through the front door, there should be a sign blinking in neon light that says "Women be quiet!" That's foolishness! That's not what the Scriptures teach at all.

Instead, it is in the context of the *public* gathering together for worship. It's saying that women are not to take the prominent place of a teacher, speaking the things of the Word of God. That will be validated later in 1 Timothy 2:12 which says "*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*" I know that some women are offended, hurt, and injured by such a claim in the Scriptures. But understand something, even other *men* are not allowed just to take the pulpit simply because they think they can. It is only men who have been called by God to preach the Word of God. On the flipside, we will see next week that in that same exclusive way, only women have the gift of motherhood which no man could possibly possess. Such is the manner by which God has designed us; unique to our own situation and for our own purpose in pursuing godliness and in upholding the things of God.

So can a woman pray in church? Certainly! She can gather together when we are praying. If we are all praying out loud, she is welcome to do that. Can she praise? Of course! It's ridiculous to suggest that she cannot. Can she speak to her neighbors and welcome new visitors? Absolutely! The intention here is for the men to demonstrate what it means to be masculine, spiritual individuals. This doesn't mean to be strong or authoritative, not at all. It means that they come with an attitude of worshipful prayer. In fact, it even tells us the manner by which such universal prayers ought to be given.

"lifting up holy hands..."

This practical issue of holiness in regards to prayer ought to be offered by the men in the congregation. They are to do it with "*lifting up of holy hands.*" Now some people feel we ought to close our church service in benediction and that's a good encouragement, but Paul's emphasis is not necessarily the posture of your hands. The emphasis of the phrase "**lifting up holy hands**" is not the physical lifting up of hands, but rather that the attitude and conduct of the person who lifts up his hands is holy. The term for "**holy**" is *hosios* (ἁγιος). It means "that which is acceptable and approved in the eyes of God." In fact, this idea is connected with the Old Testament concept of the priest having holy hands when they went to minister in the Temple. In other words, they prepared their hearts. They were clean and ready to give service unto the Lord.

It was a common posture for men to stand with their arms raised and their palms up to pray. Sometimes, they would be prostrate. Remember however, that the emphasis here is not on the posture of the person praying, but rather that they lift up holy hands, acceptable and approved to God. Now, this is a more significant statement than we might have at first realized. Men who desire to be leaders in the church and who desire to pray for the sake of the congregation are good and excellent in the eyes of God. But if they desire such positions with unacceptable or unapproved lifestyles in the eyes of the Lord, that desire would be like an unacceptable sacrifice or an unacceptable offering given upon His altar. This would be like the example of Cain. We don't know why or how he offered his offering, but God found it unacceptable. As a result, he gets mad and jealous. He then kills Abel. There is a problem with bringing an offering or sacrifice that is unacceptable to the Lord.

This could be said of anyone who comes in front of the congregation to address any issue at all if in their hearts or in their private lives or in their minds there are issues that are unacceptable to the Lord. Such an act ends up defiling the worship service. In the same, imagine if we were Israel gathered together on the Day of Atonement and they bring the sacrifice for the nation. And what they bring is not just a bad cow, but it's one that is all messed up; it's got mad cow's disease; it's shaking, has blisters and it's all yucky looking. Can you imagine bringing that to the altar and the priest sacrificing that? That would have been unacceptable to the point that it would taint the gathered community!

What does that mean by application for us? It means that men ought to lead by example in their desire to pray in every place where the churches gather. They ought to lift up holy hands (hearts). Individuals that do not come with holy hands have desecrated themselves and their congregation. They have injured the worship of God in that place. Is that a heavy burden? It ought to be. Everyone that desires to minister has to have that as part of his desire and delight—to be approved in the eyes of God, to be acceptable in the eyes of God, so that our hands are holy as we offer our prayers to Him. Anything short of that is not just sin; sin against the congregation; sin against the people of God. That is part of what leadership is—taking full responsibility for what happens amongst the congregation, the corporate congregation gathered together.

“... without wrath and dissension.”

Paul then says with specific application to these individuals at Ephesus, **“without wrath and dissension.”** It's an interesting statement. I'm not exactly sure what exactly Paul might have in mind here. It is curious to me because of all the things I understand, the idea that Paul wants men in *“every place to pray”* and *“to lift up holy hands”* (in other words, they ought to be spiritual leaders; and they ought to come as spiritual leaders with lifestyles that match their prayers) makes sense to me. Then he goes on to say *“without wrath and dissension.”* **“Wrath”** is this term **orge** (ὄργη) which means “anger” or “anger poured out.” It's a more active, volatile type of anger. It is the same term used in [Romans 1:18](#) where Paul says *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”* It is that active response. It is an active wrath. Exactly why these men would have wrath and dissensions or infighting is not clear.

Obviously, false teachers have risen amongst them and as a result, I'm sure that there would be some kind of infighting. There were probably some disagreements over those things and most likely (and this is my guess) there was this attitude of anger on both sides. Some individuals may have said, “I have a holy knowledge about the genealogies and let me explain to you this particular mythology that tells us that Enoch was really God.” They were probably teaching all these ridiculous things. And then there were others who were solid believers saying “Lord, forgive them for speaking heresy in your holy church.” So you can imagine this sense of anger; this sense of dissension that was going on.

Most likely, Paul was addressing those individuals that were in the right, who had the right sense of the things of God; who were pursuing the holy purpose in the church of God. He's telling them to be careful. It's not just enough that you can say, “I have not sinned openly and so I come with holy hands.” If you have harbored in your heart some amount of anger (even towards those who are in error) to the point that you bring wrath and dissension before the congregation, Paul is saying that that's not allowable; it is not appropriate. Put away those controversies because when you come before the living God, the sovereign One of the universe, you should not come to use the pulpit as a place to push an agenda. You don't use the prayers of the congregation as a place to chastise individuals. These are holy places where we speak of the things of the Lord. We ought to honor God and honor Him from our hearts. In other words, prayer is serious business and corporate prayer is a privilege not to be taken lightly or to be abused, even with the attitudes of the heart! It's to be used carefully and understood and applied with a manner of humility and great privilege; in the manner which the Lord would have all men approach; that is by lifting up their holy hands in every place the church is gathered.

Women's Approach to Worship (vv. 9-10)

“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.”

In verses nine and ten, Paul shifts from the men's approach to prayer to the women's approach to worship. Notice how the women are addressed in the exact same way that the men were in verse eight (i.e. “Likewise...”). Paul is saying “As I have wanted men to lift up holy hands in prayer, now I want the women to demonstrate modesty and spiritual adornment.” In the same way the term **anēr** (ἀνὴρ) can be used for either “men” or “husbands” in verse eight, Paul uses a term **gunē** (γυνή) for **“women”** which can be used for either “women” or “wives.” What is at issue is the women's need to worship God with godly adornment. The Greek word **“adorn”** is **kosmeō** (κοσμέω) which means “to put on, to arrange.” It's not used for what you physically dress yourself (which is the most common purpose of it), but rather it is used in a number of different ways, even in the New Testament.

For example, [Titus 2:9-10](#) says bond-slaves ought to *“adorn the doctrine of God”* by being submissive to their masters. In other words, they ought to “put on the doctrine of God” by being submissive to their masters.

“Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.” (emphasis mine)

Luke 21:5 talks about the temple was being adorned, or “being addressed by noble stones or offerings.” In other words, it was laid out lavishly and beautifully. It was being dressed up that way.

*“And while some were talking about the temple, that it was **adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts...**” (emphasis mine)*

Matthew 23:29 talks about the scribes and Pharisees adorning the graves of righteous people. In other words, putting on window dressing, whitewashing and making it look nice, when they are full of dead bones. It is the external appearance.

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and **adorn the monuments of the righteous**” (emphasis mine)*

Remember that Paul is speaking in the context of the corporate community and he is dealing with men who are having issues with anger and dissension, who are not approaching prayer with the right attitude. In the same disruptive way, Paul is now addressing the women. He saying that they ought to dress, adorn themselves appropriately. The terms that are used here can be used in the sense of physically dressing (i.e. in a literal manner regarding the things that they wear) and they can also be used in a metaphorical sense, which is common in the Scriptures. All of these terms signify something that is put on as an attitude of the heart, as a demeanor of the spirit.

Keep in mind that Paul is not addressing particulars, such as hairstyles. He is addressing the issues of the heart; it is not a question of outward dress, but of their inward priority. In other words, what is their inward attitude? What are they adorning themselves with? We know this is what Paul is addressing because in verse ten, he says (in a more positive way) that they ought to adorn themselves with “... *good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.*” So, it’s not about the particulars of what and how; it is more about why.

Christian women are to participate in the corporate worship service and they are to be careful in the manner in which they dress. There are three descriptions that he gives to us here:

1. “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing...”

There are three positive descriptions of how a godly woman ought to dress when she is in the corporate worship service. First, it says “**proper**” which is *kosmios* (κόσμιος), a term that means “respectable.” The only other time Paul uses this exact word is in 1 Timothy 3:2.

*“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, **respectable**, hospitable, able to teach” (emphasis mine)*

It means that they are to be honorable. It means that they are to be proper; respectable in their dress. However, this is not saying that women are not to put on makeup or to brush their hair or that they should show up looking like they did when they woke up! Of course not! They are to dress in a manner that is respectable or honorable. Please understand that Paul is not against jewelry nor is he against any particular hairstyle. He’s not against these things. Why? Because these things (this idea of certain braided hair, gold, jewelry, garments, etc.) were representative of the culture at that time. If we were to apply this portion of Scripture for ourselves, we would take it to mean that the ladies are not to be “worldly” in their dress, keeping in mind that the point that Paul is not against doing some of those things that are normal to us, such as to come attractively, to come presentably, to come honorably; those are good things. Above all, her dress should be respectable.

2. “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves... modestly...”

Secondly, he uses *aidōs* (αἰδώς) a term that is translated as “**modestly**”; she is to dress herself in modesty. It’s a great word and it means “very particularly” or “to have a sense of shame.” In other words, she is modest in the sense that there are some things that she would feel a bit ashamed about. It’s used to describe a woman’s sense of appropriateness so that they do not shame themselves in a particular situation. It’s an interesting word and it is used in many different contexts, not just in matters of dress and social interactions, but also in the manner by which we do normal work. It is to say that you are modest (by your appropriateness) in whatever sphere that you find yourself to be in. So here, women are to dress themselves in a manner that is honorable, modest, and discreet.

3. “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves... discreetly...”

“**Discreetly**” is *sōphrosunē* (σωφροσύνη) in the Greek, a term that means “moderation” or literally “self-controlled.” Here, we have that interaction of what it means to be honorable (to demonstrate modesty or a sense of shame) and to be self-controlled or discreet in the manner in which ladies ought to dress. One pastor had this to say about the issue:

“Any biblical discussion of modesty begins with the heart, not the hemline. What fruit of the Spirit is seen in the modestly dressed woman? Self-control and intentional restraint and moderation for the purpose of purity. Modesty, therefore, is simply humility expressed in dress. The humble Christian

woman who understands this passage will have a wardrobe that expresses self-control, moderation, and restraint. What she wears will demonstrate that she lives with a settled resistance to this ceaseless pull of the world. She will dress to show the grace and beauty of womanhood and to reveal a humble heart; not to call attention to herself, to flaunt her beauty, impress her peers, or allure men sexually.”

Ladies, what does your wardrobe suggest to others about your heart? Do you believe that a group of mature Christians would evaluate your wardrobe by using words such as “modest,” “pure,” and “humble?” More significantly, what words do you most hope that people will use and what kind of things do you hope people will think about your dress? It’s important that you are to articulate answers to such questions. Do the answers you give reflect a heart of humility and modesty?

Women are to be careful (in the corporate congregation) that they do not come as a distraction unto the men and unto other women, as well. Partly, this is an issue of sensuality. It is also an issue of just pure extravagance. If any lady comes into a congregation and she desires to be godly, I doubt that any Christian woman intentionally comes with a flaunting attitude. But if she does come in that manner, she can become a stumbling block to both men and women; a distraction to the gathered community of believers. She needs to concentrate and think carefully about what she wears and why she wears it. Paul continues by saying the following:

“... not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments...”

Should we (by this statement) declare that as you come to the door that you should leave all your gold bands (e.g. your wedding bands) at the door or that you should take off any gold or jewelry that you might have worn whether they even be your glasses? That’s foolishness! It’s not about those particular things. In fact, Paul is speaking against the excess of the cultural issues at that time. He’s speaking particularly against imitating the worldliness that is demonstrated in the courts of the Roman Empire. It became the fad back then. Some of the early church historians would note that in the early history of Rome, the women’s hairstyles were merely an issue of length. They would just part it in the middle and it just fell down. Later, fashion in the Roman court started to get more fancy and the women started to put gold adornments in their hair and weaved in pearls; all to demonstrate their wealth and their opulence. This fashion trend trickled down to the church and ladies began to imitate those worldly styles, particularly those trends that would identify them with sensuality and immodesty. I like what one commentator said:

“Today, it is the equivalent of warning Christian women away from imitation of styles set by promiscuous pop singers or actresses”.

What is forbidden is an ostentatious form of dress. Here’s a question for you. What does your dress associate you with? With whom or what does your style of dress imitate? That’s an important question. Because I come kind of conservatively to church whenever I come and minister. In fact whenever I teach, I dress more conservative than I normally do. If you guys see me during the week (if you come by the house) you guys know what to expect—some old shorts that I’d been wearing the whole week, some old, ratty t-shirt with the collar all bent because I’ve been sweating in it; I don’t care. I am not necessarily the well-dressed, “dressed-for-success” kind of individual. But when it comes to church, I feel an obligation to dress more formally and it’s not an obligation that would I place upon you. I don’t get upset with how you guys dress on Sundays. It’s an obligation I put upon myself. If I am to come and represent the Lord as I speak His Word, I ought to at least come dressed nicely. It doesn’t have to be a three-piece suit or anything, but I need to be at least more formal than I usually am.

My hope is that my dress associates me with the best of men, with the best of that which is serious—as modest and appropriate—because I come to represent my God and His holy Word. Does your wardrobe evidence self-control, moderation or does it represent excess?

It’s funny when you read like some of the early church fathers and their early writings. Let me read you one. John Chrysostom (347 - 407) was a notable Christian bishop and preacher from the 4th and 5th centuries in Syria and Constantinople. This is what he said:

“And what then is modest apparel? Such as covers them completely and decently and not with superfluous ornaments, for the one is decent and the other is not... Why do you approach God to pray with brodered hair and ornaments of gold? Are you coming to a ball? Or a marriage feast? To a carnival? Such costly things might have been seasonable. Here, not one of them is wanted. You are come to pray, to ask pardon for your sins, to plead for your offense, beseeching the Lord, and hoping to render Him propitious to you. Away with such hypocrisy!”

It’s a strong statement. Kind of a fun one. Don’t you like that? Are you coming to a ball? This isn’t a wedding feast! What’s the matter with you? Come in a manner that is appropriate. It would be just as inappropriate for a woman to come wearing a stylish mink fur and in her evening gown, all primed and proper after three hours at the hair salon and body shop. She is coming to demonstrate her opulence. That is as much a distraction as immodest and inappropriate dress. There is much to be said about the propriety; how a woman comes dressed to church.

I don’t want to belabor this point but I think it’s a significant one. Again, it basically comes down to an issue of the heart. We’ve been speaking about external adornment, but it’s really an issue of the spiritual or inner adornment. In other words, the external might imply something that you don’t desire to imply when it comes to your own heart.

“... but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.”

I want to stress that there's nothing wrong with Christian women being fashionable and attractive. That is good, proper, and excellent. But the worldly definition of beauty tends to drift into immodesty, sensuality, allurements, self-centeredness, and self-glorification. None of those qualities are fit for godly women. We need to understand that godly women should care nothing for immodesty, sensuality, allurements, of self-centeredness, and drawing attention or glory to themselves. It is wicked to think that godly women should coexist with such attitudes of the heart.

The heart attitude (the proper adornment that Scripture speaks to) is that which would demonstrate good works. It's that proverb 31 woman—the one who brings praise to her husband at the gates. How does that proverb 31 woman bring praise for her husband? By how she is dressed? No. She brings praise because she is a gracious woman and wife. That is the blessing of what a woman can do.

Ladies, we are so funny to conclude or assume what life is and what life isn't about. There are so many things that we realize about how our thinking is so different from what the Scriptures would demand when we actually approach it. For example, we are entering into one of the most controversial portions of Scripture in the New Testament that is whether a woman is allowed to preach in the church. That's a big deal and people want to make big ruckus about it because they feel it's not an equality that is given in the Scriptures. I would completely disagree. But that's what they claim—that there is a lack of equality between a man and woman. There is unfairness and a disproportionate privilege given to men.

On the one hand, we speak of such things (and I understand their heart and their desire) carefully as to not belittle women. On the other hand, women gladly and willingly embrace a worldly and fleshly concept of immodest dress, so that they are more closely associated with the things of the world—it's sensualities, worldliness, and immodesties. What's worse is that they are fine with that kind of comfort with the world.

The question is this: What does the Lord see in us? What He sees in us and what He sees in ladies is a beauty that is far greater than the external—what they look like and how they present themselves. God sees that which is beautiful from the heart. There is beauty in good works, of being a godly woman that befits every woman that has born a testimony of walking with the Lord. It's good works that provides a biblical basis and God's basis for godliness. He says these women ought to make a claim to being godly by having their hearts adorned or dressed with the right attitudes and the right heart.

It is interesting (because their public testimony) when it says that they make “**a claim to godliness.**” This suggests that they had made a public profession or public testimony to be godly in a wicked world. That is their stated ambition—to be godly, not sexy.

Since when has being sexy been considered a godly virtue? Yet, it is talked about as if that is a good thing by believers! We know that their heart and desire is not to go “Lord, I offer to you a life full of the style of sexiness.” We are not going stand before the living God upon our death and have the Lord ask us: “Nam, what have you offered? What have you done to my glory in this life?” And I say “I was sexy, Lord. You know I was sexy.” That does not appeal to godliness. Because of the world's subtle, slow influence (through television and movies) our hearts have been won over to this type of thinking. We think that this is what is appropriate and good. But that is not appropriate. Don't worry about what is external, worry about what is internal. 1 Peter 3:3-4 reminds the women an important thing:

“And let not your adornment be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, **which is precious in the sight of God.**” (pastor's emphasis)

This is what God delights in—to see a heart given over to Him. I don't believe we have a problem in our congregation with immodesty, so I'm not addressing it with that in mind. Let the Lord speak to you in His Word as He would do. This exhortation is not directed at anybody in particular, but may the ladies of this congregation be careful to adorn themselves with spiritual beauty. Let that be the thing that you are known for and let that be the thing that the Lord would delight in.

Review

Let's kind of look over the whole thing we looked at in these three verses:

- **Men:** What should be our attitude? How should we adorn ourselves when we come to the church? We ought to be prepared to lead by example in prayerful worship and conduct—with holy hands, without wrath and dissension; that we come to lead in the worship of God. That is a blessed and honorable thing. If you come half-baked and don't know what's going on, kind of stumbling your way in, then you have ripped off your opportunity to display to your wife and children what your responsibility in worship by coming without an attitude of holy hands lifted up in prayer.
- **Women:** When you come to the church, let it your attitude not be concerned with the externals. Dress in a manner that is appropriate (as you have conviction with the Lord). Focus yourself more explicitly in what is in the heart. May it be the good works and the virtue of your heart that shines forth your beauty. What individual among us, especially the men, have not known young ladies in the course of their lives that at first glance looked interesting, but not spectacular, but upon knowing their heart and seeing who they are in their heart and the beauty that God had created them to be, find them more and more attractive and appropriate and just beautiful in the eyes of God.

It's interesting that both of these commands—men to lead in prayer and women to participate without distraction—are given to us (remember the earlier part of this chapter) in the context of praying for the gospel. In other words, the idea is that this is to the glory of God—our heart attitude. This is how we display His glory; that we would present ourselves, dress ourselves in such a manner that the world would see the value of knowing Christ and being transformed into His likeness. That's the beauty of this portion of Scripture. It's an excellent one. Let's close this time in prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We thank You. We thank You for the virtue of Your Word, and how it convicts us to think carefully; to think carefully about our attitudes as we come together in corporate worship that as men that You'd call us to be prepared to lead, to lead by prayer, and to do that with holy hearts, without attitudes of wrath and dissension, but instead to come with purity, to come with delight, and to know that we have the privilege of being able to lead our congregation—the ladies, the children, to lead all of us, one another into the glory of the Lord.

Lord, we pray to thank You that the women might be encouraged, Lord, to seek out not the excess of dress, but instead the virtue of godly character in the heart; that which You see is truly and excellently beautiful indeed.

And Lord, I pray that You would give us conviction in these very practical matters. That we might understand that when we gather together for the corporate body, Lord, that there is a preparation of heart for all of us whether it's for the pastor who is preaching, the individuals who come up to pray, whether it's for the ladies in just their beauty and expressing their words of encouragement and participating in the congregation, all of us together, Lord, we form the body of Christ and we minister one to another.

Help us to prepare ourselves, to give of ourselves, for the sake of others. We pray to thank You for this encouraging word, and ask that You would bless us to understand it and apply it in our lives.

*In Jesus name,
Amen.*