

I Timothy 2:1-15

I Timothy 2:1-8: A call to pray for all people

Commentary:

The whole of chapter 2 lays instructions concerning appropriate public worship within the church of Ephesus. In this first section (v1-8) Paul's emphasis is on the importance of prayer in worship. He calls for believers to pray for all men, but in particular, those that had authority over them in the hope that they may live in peace.

The Roman Emperor Nero was in power at this time and he was violently opposed to Christianity. Many Christians died at his hands, including Paul himself in 67 AD. However, as we read in this passage God desires for all men, even those that persecute His people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (v4). Paul's instructions here clearly demonstrate the inclusivity of the gospel. This attitude is in stark contrast to the elitist, exclusivist approach of the false teachers.

Comprehension Questions

Carefully read through I Timothy 2:1-8, then attempt to answer the following comprehension questions:

- 1) Who does Paul instruct believers to pray for (v1-2)?

- 2) In what manner does Paul instruct the believers at Ephesus to pray?

- 3) What purpose does praying for these people serve (v2 & 4)?

- 4) How does living "a quiet and peaceable life" reflect well on the faith?

- 5) What is God's desire for all people (v4)?

- 6) Why is Jesus the only one who can fill the role of mediator between God and man (v5-6)? Look at Hebrews 9.11-15 to help you answer this question.

- 7) What are the four instructions that Paul gives for men in verse 8?

I Timothy 2:9-15: Behaviour of men and women in the church

Comprehension Questions

Carefully read through I Timothy 2:9-15, then attempt to answer the following comprehension questions before you read the commentary below:

8) In v9, describe how Paul advises Christian women to dress and adorn themselves

9) Also in v9, identify the elements of dress and adornment that Paul advises Christian women to avoid

10) Why do you think Paul gave this advice?

11) Read v10. Do you think, on the basis of Paul's advice in v9 that this verse suggests it is wrong for Christian women today to wear expensive clothing, jewellery and makeup?

12) Consider the word "silence" used by Paul in v11 & v12. What do you think Paul means by applying this word to women in the church?

13) In v11 and also in Ephesians 5:24 (Remember, Timothy was ministering as the pastor at Ephesus), Paul uses the word "subjection" in relation to women. What do you think he means by this?

14) In v12, Paul instructs Timothy that women are "*not to usurp authority over the man.*" What do you think he means by this?

15) In v13-15 Paul makes reference to the events in the garden of Eden that led to the downfall of mankind. How does this relate to the matter of the role of men and women in the church?

Now that you have considered these questions and hopefully tried to answer them all, I have just one more.

16) Do you think Paul is a first century misogynist?

Now proceed to read the commentary below, then revisit each of the above questions and see if you might need to change some of your answers

Commentary

In I Timothy 2:9-15 Paul gives instruction and wise advice to Timothy on the appropriate conduct of men and women in the Ephesian church. Across the centuries since Paul wrote them these verses have caused much controversy and in many cases anguish and distress in the bible believing, evangelical church that seeks to interpret the bible literally and operate in a manner as parallel as possible to the first century churches established under Apostolic authority. Opinion is as varied as women having no role in the spiritual ministry of the church whatsoever, to women only being permitted to minister to other women but never to men all the way to the modern church where some have expressed the opinion that Paul must have been a misogynistic, hardnosed evangelist with a deeply choleric personality.

The truth, of course, lies not in any of the above extremes, but in understanding the intent and meaning of the passage in terms of the Greek grammar and the context in which it is set both culturally and in relation to other scriptures dealing with the same subject.

Were women actively involved the ministry of the first century church?

In addressing this question, one needs look no further than I Corinthians 11:2-16 and Titus 2:1-10. It is clear from these verses that women were indeed active and acknowledged in the Apostolic church. Furthermore, in Galatians Paul made it clear that there are no distinctions between men and women in Christ. He indicates that while there are differences between the sexes, there are no distinctions between believers whether they be male or female.

Sobriety the key to understanding I Timothy 2:9

The culture in which the Ephesian Christians lived explains why Paul gave the advice to women that he did in v9. Ephesus was the most important city in Western Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in New Testament times. In fact, it was called 'the mother city' of Asia. It had an estimated population of around 200,000 – 250,000, which was huge for those days, and it rivalled Antioch, Corinth, Alexandria and even Rome itself. Its wealth and importance came from its location. It was situated on an inland harbour linked by a canal to the River Cayster which flowed into the Aegean Sea; and it was at the crossroads of major trade routes. So, it was an extremely

important commercial centre in fact, the largest trading centre in Asia Minor, attracting people from all over the world.

Its geographical position and commercial importance, however, are overshadowed by its religious depravity. The great Temple of Diana dominated the skyline as did the sexually charged worship of Artemis. "Worshippers" would engage with temple prostitutes believing that they would gain the blessing of the goddess Diana by doing so. These prostitutes were loud and assertive, identifying themselves to the public by dressing in gaudy, expensive clothing, adorning themselves with excessive amounts of jewellery and either braiding their hair or shaving their heads bald in order to attract the lustful attention of men.

In light of this deeply sinful culture, it is not difficult to see why Paul gave the admonition he did in I Timothy 2:9-10 as to how a Christian woman should dress and adorn herself.

Sobriety the key to understanding I Timothy 2:9 cont.

Sophron, The Greek word which is translated "sobriety" means the "voluntary limitation of one's freedom of thought and behaviour" or more succinctly stated, "sober mindedness." The truth is, in Christianity women became free and equal with their husbands. While there existed a danger of some women taking this newfound freedom to extremes, Paul admonishes Timothy to teach the church to be sober minded and maintain a proper order of behaviour while recognising the freedom and equality of the sexes.

I think it is easy to see why Paul has written I Timothy 2:9-10 in the way he has.

Silence does not mean not speaking

The Greek word "*gune*" can be equally translated as woman or wife. For man, the Greek word is "andros" which is equally translated husband as the context demands in this passage. To be brief and succinct, this passage in context is wife (*gune*) and husband (*andros*). For the wives, Paul's instruction to Timothy is that they are to be in silence, to learn in silence, not usurping the authority of their husbands and not to teach (I Timothy 2:11-12).

So what does it mean to "*be in silence*?" In fact, the expression has nothing at all to do with not speaking. The Greek word from which silence is translated is "*hesuchia*" which literally means to be tranquil, or to be in a state of being undisturbed.

In the times Paul lived, formal education, particularly in the scriptures, was only afforded to males. Females were to be taught at home, particularly by the females in the family hierarchy to manage the home (food acquisition and preparation, cleaning, grinding wheat and barley, winemaking, etc).

In the freedom which was now afforded to women who had become Christians, they too could be offered education. In the immediate social and spiritual context, that was to be provided by their husbands from the formal education they had received. Paul is encouraging women to take advantage of that educational opportunity with a tranquil, peaceful attitude which arises from respect for the God ordained family headship of the husband. This is the context of the statement to Timothy given the history and culture of the people he served as pastor at Ephesus.

Teaching

Paul's instruction to Timothy is "*I suffer not a wife to teach.*" Given the discussion on silence, it almost seems superfluous to raise this issue, but the Greek verb (*didaskhein*) from which "*teach*" is translated is in the present infinitive, rendering the translation "*teach constantly and continuously.*" In the context of the first century church at Ephesus, this would clearly be a situation where a woman was usurping the God given order in the home.

Authority and the order ordained by God at creation

The Greek word "*authentein*" is translated "*to usurp authority over.*" Essentially, a wife's life should be above reproach and she should never undermine the position that has been given to him by God at creation. Additionally, a wife should never encroach upon that position but support her husband and show respect for the plan and purpose of God expressed in human marriage. In referencing the creative act of God in Genesis, Paul explains why this is so in I Timothy 2:13-15.

So, what can a woman do in the church today?

Aside from holding the position of Elder, pretty much anything. The spiritual gifts are listed in the scripture as adjectives in the neuter gender, meaning they are distributed by the Holy Spirit as He sees fit and are unrelated to the gender of the person receiving the gift. Spiritual gifts are given for use in the local body of Christ. In addition, there are so many examples of women in spiritual leadership roles (as opposed to governance) in the scripture that it would be fraught indeed and to the disadvantage of the local body of Christ to deny a gifted woman the opportunity to use her God given gifts in the church. Having that freedom, respect and recognition of course goes hand in hand with the behavioural standards that are outlined by Paul to Timothy in relation to the original creative order of the family.