

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.

⁷ For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth;^[a] I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

⁸ Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. ⁹ Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, ¹⁰ but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹ A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. ¹² I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. ¹⁵ But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.

True Worship

Before us stands one of the most controversial passages in all of the New Testament. Yes, Paul tells us we must pray for all people, even for those for whom we have no hope. But that's not what is so controversial. The words that offend so many that stand out as a joke among secular society are Paul's instructions to Timothy concerning women in the congregation. Books have been written on these few verses. Over 400 pages of ink have been spilled on these simple words of scripture.

And the church reacts by ignoring, avoiding, or even worse agreeing with those who hate God and his Word. It's no surprise that our culture doesn't like what Paul has to say. But it should surprise us when Christians begin by bracketing out portions of the bible that they don't like for if that continues there won't be much left.

But before we label Paul a he-man woman hater, a misogynist, what does he say? These inspired and inerrant words aren't so easily removed from Scripture. For if there is a problem with Paul, then there is a problem with his call. If there is a problem with his call, then there is a problem with Jesus. If there is a problem with Jesus then our doctrine falls apart and Christianity along with it. No we won't win any popularity contests. But we recognize what these words really are. God's Word through his called apostle on true worship.

If Timothy is going to purge the churches of Ephesus of the destructive false teachings, he'll need the True Doctrine and practice. He needs to put that teaching into practice and it starts with worship specifically: prayer. It is the simplest expression of faith. It admits a higher power. It calls on God to act. It's an act of worship in which one looks outside of self to someone else. And Paul wants, *petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone*. Petitions: are requests that come from a deep and humble awareness of one's need. Prayer: refers to requests and conversations with the Lord. Intercessions: are prayers on behalf of others. Thanksgivings: gives thanks for the gifts that God gives. These prayers are to be made *for all people*. Even kings and those who are in authority (whether you think they should be there or not). Notice the inclusivity.

But then Paul gets specific and exclusive. In verse 8 he switches to a different term (*andras*) with the definite article, "*I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument.*" And yet Paul's not only exclusive he's inclusive, "*in every place,*" This isn't just a message for the churches in Ephesus. The language used is for everyone. Men are to pray in public worship without anger or argument. That sure sounds like they were having a lot of problems. Can you imagine the people who call themselves Christian who argue and fight like a couple of roosters all proud and puffed up, wanting to be teachers of the law as Paul expressed in chapter 1? I can. But you can't pray together, let alone for one another, if you're fighting with one another.

Paul then turns to "*the women.*" They are to "*dress themselves in modest clothing and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel.*" Why would what one wears matter at all? If it's about appearances for men, then it can be about appearances for women too. I need to appear important. This could be a jab at the "new woman"

issues emerging in the Roman world. They were casting off gender rolls long before it was popular. In addition to this the women who wore such things in the first century would be considered a working girl propositioning those in church. Paul wants both men and women to understand that they are responsible for the atmosphere of worship. It is not a place to fight and argue, it's a place of prayer. It's not a place to parade vainly; it's a place of worship. The church is to be a place of modesty, for the men and women to hear the word of the Lord.

And then Paul drives home the point, "*A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man: instead she is to remain quiet.*" It's a command in the 3rd person singular. I've never seen so many people worked up over Paul's command that woman learn. Paul's command is to Timothy, "Let them learn," or better yet, "See to it that they learn and that you provide the proper atmosphere conducive to learning." But in order to learn you need to listen. *Faith comes from hearing the word* (Romans 10:17). It's not that they cannot pray in worship, Paul knows that they do (1 Corinthians 11:5,13) But the point is that the Pastor should serve. "*I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man,*" that is your job Timothy as a pastoral leader. All of this is about the right attitude and deportment which are critical to worship.

Here and again in Titus as well as in Peter the pastoral office is reserved for men, but not all men, only those who are called. Let women learn. What should be outrageous is that this went against cultural norms of the day. Women didn't study under Judaism. In fact a Jew would wake up each morning and bless the day, "Blessed are you, Lord of the universe, who has not made me a gentile, slave, or a woman." Women were excluded from study. But Paul says, "Let them learn." Christianity has done more to liberate and promote equality for woman than anything before it.

And we're upset about it? I expect our society to be upset, since we can't even define what a woman is without offending someone. But that attitude is prevalent and do we buy into it by imagining you can do anything you put your heart to... you can even change the stars? No, Disney makes poor theology. You can't. We are limited by God in what we can and can't do. You can't even have a child if God closes a womb. I don't want this to be a biology lesson but men are different and women have their unique qualities too.

God has called us to different rolls. But immature and lazy men do not seek out responsibility, much less leadership. It's avoided like church. In every part of society where women have said, "I want to do that too," they have handed over their control to women to run. Men have stepped aside from family, society, education, and said, "Fine, I didn't want to do it anyhow," relinquishing their god given role. This isn't worship. This is abandonment. We'll complain, just like society, "Where have all the good men gone?" Feminism is cancerous to chivalry, joy, and men, creating only petulant little children. And we wonder why this happens in the church.

We've stepped outside of our God given roles and it's backfired, yet again. We need a continuous call to men; we need to you to lead. Women need to listen and to learn because we need you too. We need faithful women.

What is unique to women, what no other man can do, is have a child. God has blessed women with the responsibility of co-creator of all humanity. She is the means by which his son would come into this world. She is uniquely created and blessed to fulfill. Paul points to the uniqueness of women, "*But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.*"

Far from rejecting one's role, embrace it. But not every woman can have children, just as not every man is a leader in the church. That's the point. No woman is saved by giving birth to a child. Neither is any woman condemned because she cannot bear a child. Having been saved by grace through faith, each woman is God's workmanship in Christ. The woman of faith will continue to fulfill the good work that God has given her to do.

But when roles are rejected bad things happen. Paul points to the Fall but pre-Fall Adam was formed first. God gave him the responsibility to teach Eve his commands. "*And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and*

transgressed.” Eve was deceived. She listened to the serpent and became a teacher to Adam. Adam wasn’t deceived. He knew what he was doing. He became a transgressor. Some will honor Adam more than he should be by saying, “He chose to live the life of a sinner rather than live without Eve. He too bit the apple in love.” I think his actions were less noble. He knew what he was getting in to (he wasn’t deceived). He willingly sinned and *sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin* (Romans 5:12).

And because of this, we are sinners. We fight. We argue. We think only of ourselves and not of the person next to us. We sin and we’re good at it. But God has done something to bring us together, something that levels the playing field. “*There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” (Galatians 3:28).

We are one in Christ. True worship keeps its focus on Jesus, not on what one can or can’t do. The focus is on God. God sent his son into this world through the seed of woman but he came as a man. He led the way. He opened up for us the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is the “*one mediator between God and humanity*” You don’t need an angel, a saint, or even Mary to intercede for you because there is only one who can: Jesus. He *gave himself as a ransom for all*, because all, both male and female are important and precious in his sight, because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

That’s why he sent his son into the world. Who suffered, served, and still leads his church through his called apostles: like Paul who gives us God’s Word concerning Christ as well as for order in worship. Jesus still cares for his church, that’s why Paul was appointed. He didn’t apply for the position. He wasn’t interviewed and hired based on qualifications. He was called and whether the people like him or not they were to listen, honor, and obey. That word for submit that many women don’t like is also applied to all people in Hebrews 13. “*Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.*”

In humility we stand before God and give thanks to him not because he didn’t make me a gentile, a slave, or a woman but because of his many and varied gifts. Men, you are given the responsibility to lead your family, lead the church, and serve Christ by serving both. Women you are given Christ’s honor. Just as Christ serves his church, you are served, loved, and cherished. God has called men, pastors to serve you. And men should look on you as Mother, wife, sister, or daughter, not to put down the women we love but to take care of them.

Both are responsible for the atmosphere of worship. We don’t come to change the church into what we think it should be but rather to be changed by her into what God wants us to be. Here he changes us with water and the word. Here he changes us and we are ransomed with his body and blood. Here at his pulpit he speaks his powerful and effective Word through his called servant. And the sermon should point you to Jesus: it should be *a witness* to him *at the proper time*. That is true worship. It’s the Divine Service where God shows up and God serves you.

So in humility, in thanksgiving, let us pray, let us listen, and let us respond with willing obedience lifting up holy hands in thanksgiving.

True worship reflects true doctrine which is still all about Jesus. Amen.