

# 1 Timothy

# 4 | 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15



# ***O V E R V I E W - 1 T I M O T H Y 2 : 8 - 1 5***

## **GRACE AND TRUTH**

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17).*

Sometimes when the Word of God makes us feel uncomfortable we can be tempted to move on to other parts of Scripture which trouble us less and seem easier to understand and accept. One of the blessings of reading God’s word regularly (daily) and systematically (book by book) is that we allow the Word of God to set the agenda for our lives. We will be continually reminded of what it means to together as God’s people as we witness for Christ in a fallen world. Paul places a high value on the church when says it is *“the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”* (1 Tim 3:15).

When it comes to a passage like this we are aware that its teaching may be counter-cultural and seen as out of touch with the contemporary world we inhabit, and in which we (the church) are together to witness for Christ. It is also important to state that the Word of God refutes any abuse and bullying in our relationships with one another and the world. We are to flee from belittling those whose views do not agree with our own, both in and beyond the church. We are to respond with grace and patience to those who might belittle us, while we will *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”* (1 Peter 3:15).

## **IMAGE BEARERS**

As this passage in 1 Timothy 2 is anchored in the opening chapters of Genesis it will be useful to begin there. Firstly, it is clear from Genesis 1:26-28 that men and women are created equal in the sight of God, as his image-bearers, female and male. God’s original intention for humanity was that we would ultimately find our identity and worth in him, and live life in relationship with him and with one another. There was an order to these relationships: God – humanity – creation. Genesis 2 turned the focus to the responsibility of stewarding the creation God had blessed to our use (he was still the owner) and explained that the man and the woman would do so as partners and companions.

With sin introduced in Genesis 3 we sought to reverse the order established in Genesis 1. Creation would become a burden rather than a blessing, and our relationships with one another, and then with God, would become characterised by enmity and resistance as we sought to serve ourselves rather than bless others. Despite our sinfulness, Christ acted in the cross, taking on our humanity, to restore the tainted image of God within us, We are now being renewed to become more like him (Col 3:10), a transformation to be perfected together on the Day of his return. The order compromised in Genesis 3 is now restored in Christ, such that his Lordship enables us to strive for unity in the church, partnering together in the gospel. God’s plan is equip his church to bear the image of Christ until the final coming of his Kingdom.

## **TOGETHER AS THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD**

From 1 Timothy it is Paul’s unifying desire that the believers in Ephesus would know and teach the gospel of God’s grace (1:13-16), and live lives of godliness in the light of that grace (3:16). The universal nature of Paul’s address to Timothy ensures that desire is ours today as we live together as the Household of God according to his Word and in the power of his Spirit. 1 Timothy is a letter from the apostle that addresses order within the church. Not of the sake of usurping (Genesis 3), but for the outcome of blessing (the servant sacrifice of Christ). Hence the ‘therefores’ in chapter 2 (v 1 & v 8) are outworkings of the call in chapter 1 to call for godliness in this church, and all the churches.

Let us consider what Paul has to say to Timothy about men and women being a gospel blessing to one another in the church. After calling all the church to prayer in the opening verses of chapter 2, Paul now addresses the particular behaviour and responsibilities of men and women in the church.

**Men praying (v 8).** Holiness in prayer is the call, in place of anger and dispute. The emphasis is not on posture but on attitude (all sorts of positions are adopted in Scripture for prayer – kneeling, standing, prostrate). Paul has already urged Timothy to encourage his church to be praying for all people and those in authority in vv 1-2. Prayer (especially that seeking the outcome of v 2) appears to have been the victim of the false teaching that prevails in the church Timothy is tasked to lead. Men are to repent of their sinful treatment of others and turn to God in prayer. We assume that Paul would want everyone to pray that way, but here the behavioural concern seems to sit with the men in the church.

**Women wearing (vv 9-10).** Good deeds are called for in reverence for God, in place of self-adornment. Dressing modestly is the instruction, which is explained in three ways: 1) exercising modesty and self-control; 2) rejecting extravagant looks and expensive tastes; and 3) cultivating good works rather than keeping up appearances. Internal maturity is accompanied by external modesty. Braided hair, gold, pearls and expensive clothes are not in and of themselves the issue. We could of course say the same about any number of material blessings God has granted to us. As with any gift from God the problem is making it a god. It appears that for the church in Ephesus keeping up appearances had become a benchmark by which worth and value was assessed. Paul turns the focus to the heart once again. Good works are cultivated in those who profess a life of faith and service. Again we would assume Paul desired all in the church to serve this way.

**Women learning (vv 11):** We note Paul becomes more specific in his instruction, turning to the task learning and teaching the gospel of grace (1 Tim 4:13). *Let a women learn* expresses Paul's desire for women in the church to be learners (as so for men). It has been argued that his instruction for women to learn was counter-cultural in his day. Yet just as men and women serve together, so they learn the gospel of grace together.

Paul directs a particular way for women to learn in v 11: *in quietness*, and *all submission*. *In quietness* accords with Paul's instruction in v 2, which carries the sense of orderliness and peace of mind, rather than silence. Timothy is to work towards ordering the church so that learning the gospel is the priority for the church. This leads to the explanatory phrase *in all submission*. Our contemporary ears find even the use of such vocabulary troubling. But what did Paul mean by this explanation about women learning in the church?

We discover in the New Testament, submission is part of our life as the church. All Christians submit themselves to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21), Christ submits himself to the Father, who puts all things under him (1 Cor 15:28). We submit ourselves to governing authorities (Rom 13:1). Younger men do so to their elders (1 Peter 5:5). Wives to their husbands (Eph 5:21-22). Children to their parents (Luke 2:51). God's people under ministers of the gospel (1 Cor 16:16).

The word for submission in the original language of the New Testament comes from a combination of *under* and *order*, and is always used in a positive, redeeming sense. We submit to another as God (re)orders relationships in the church through the redemption of Christ in a disordered world, with the desire to build our unity in Christ, not to break it down (as appeared to be happening in the church in Ephesus). Absolute submission is only given to God. Our submission to one another is limited by the nature and scope of responsibility we have to one another, such as here limited to one aspect of our church life. According to the Word of God, we submit to the sacrificial servant-hearted care that is to be exercised by any who have responsibility in the Body of Christ. Self-sacrifice is the biblical norm epitomised in the person of Christ.

Verse 12 parallels the teaching of v 11, explaining teaching, alongside learning. Paul logically moves from *submission* to *authority*, a consequence of the instruction of v 11. Paul refers in this verse to men and women in the household of God, in fellowship, and explains that the submission of v 11 means that a woman in the fellowship is not to have authority over a man when it comes to teaching.

From Paul's letter to Timothy we assume this is a reference to the sound teaching of the gospel (1 Tim 2:12; 4:13). In the congregational sense this would appear to be the teaching of the gospel in the form of a sermon, though many have argued other contexts in which this would apply. Paul's use of *authority* is used in the positive sense, aligned with the instruction *to teach* (as opposed to domineering or lording it over others). However it is applied in the church, all believers should seek to wrestle with the application in a godly and constructive manner.

Authority is defined (and limited) by responsibility. It requires those in authority not to abuse the task they have been given, and those submitting not to seek to overthrow it. We know in our human sinfulness we will live with the tension of these two until the return of Christ. Paul will go on to speak of the overseer in chapter 3 as someone who will be a blessing to the household of God. Their authority is a loving, serving, sacrificial authority.

**Women teaching (vv 13-14):** Paul gives an explanation for his instructions in vv 13-14. As mentioned above, the reference in these verses is to Genesis 2 & 3. Paul's anchoring in the Old Testament Scriptures reminds us his teaching is not limited to the church of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Ephesus. Paul outlines the ordering of creation, echoing Genesis 2. Man is made first. Formed by God. A garden to tend to is the work he is charged with. Unable to do so on his own, God creates a companion to join him in the task. They are equal, yet complementary in their roles. They are both man and woman, and as the chapter unfolds, husband and wife (yet the good order of creation pre-empts even marriage).

A complementary discussion follows where Paul refers to Genesis 3. While the woman is the first one deceived, Adam acts in full knowledge of his culpability before God. He cannot shift the responsibility, nor claim superiority. Paul's point is to emphasise the disordering (reversing) of relationships, with God, with each other, and with creation. Disobedience usurps the order. But it should not be interpreted that a woman teaching a man will lead him into disobedience, or that the woman would be a false teacher. The reference to Genesis 2 & 3 appears to primarily concern order in relationships. As such, Paul does not see it as appropriate for a woman to be teaching the gospel (1 Tim 2:12; 4:13) in mixed congregations. It is not a question of ability or capacity, talent or giftedness. It does not preclude women teaching in other contexts. Likewise any teacher who interprets this command to use such authority for lording it over others (women or men) has misunderstood the intent behind the order Paul is looking for in the household of God. Honouring and respecting the ordering of relationships and responsibilities within the church is for the blessing and unity of God's people.

### **Women saved (v 15)**

If we understand that Paul is continuing his Genesis 3 reference in v 15, he is affirming that salvation is in no way an issue hinging on these instructions, lest any believe that the reference to being deceived in the previous verse should place an eternal future in jeopardy. Rather, continuing in faith and love and holiness, with self-control will be the evidence of salvation.

Paul's concluding reference to childbirth sounds perplexing. The understanding of the literal phrase *through the childbirth* usually comes down to two meanings. The child who is to be born is Christ, the fulfilment of the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, and so the woman of v 15 is Mary. Or the reference is to the judgment of Genesis 3:16, referencing the pain of childbirth, the consequence of the fall, which will not be a barrier to the salvation God makes possible through Christ (1 Tim 1:15). Considerable discussion has ensued over Paul's intended meaning, and it is likely that Timothy may have had a deeper understanding of the reference than ours. The universal nature (both women and men) of salvation by grace through Christ may place weight on the first interpretation.

*Remember to surround your time in your Small Group with prayer, for this is our ultimate act of submission, to the one who has authority over all. Give thanks that the blessings we have all received through Christ are for the building up of his church. May our unity in him flourish as we seek to live together in the light of the gospel.*

## ***GETTING STARTED***

1. When we think about equality in the church it has sometimes been stated in small groups that we don't need a leader, as everyone has the same position. Do you think this is a biblical model? Do you think the ordering of any roles in the church is a good or a bad thing?

## ***INTO THE TEXT***

***Read 1 Timothy 2:8-15***

2. The men are called to pray in a particular way? How?
3. Do you think posture matters when we pray? Do you think this teaching could apply to the whole church?
4. In vv 9-10 what remedy is suggested to address the desire to keep up appearances? In what ways do you think this teaching could apply to the whole church?
5. Paul uses the same word for *quiet* in v 11 as he did in verse 2. How might this help us understand what is being encouraged in the behaviour of v 11?
6. If the reference to quiet is more about the church understanding the ordering of relationships (rather than silence) how does this help us recognise the place of submission and authority to teach that Paul refers to in v 12? Consider how all of God's people come under submission and the authority of others (Eph 5:21; 1 Cor 15:28; Rom 13:1; 1 Peter 5:5; Eph 5:21-22; Luke 2:51; 1 Cor 16:16).
7. How does Paul's reference to the teaching of Genesis help us understand whether the passage applies to us today?

## ***TAKEAWAY***

8. Paul had placed Timothy in charge of the church so that the household of God ought to know how to conduct itself (1 Tim 3:15). The picture of the church in chapter 1 (vv 1-10) seems to be one of fracture, disharmony and false teaching. Do you think the teaching about men and women's roles in vv 8-15 of chapter 2 could build or break down unity in the church?
9. If you felt that this teaching was causing a tension for you in terms of your understanding and experience of church life what steps do you think you should take?