

When the Church Comes Together, Part 1 – 1 Timothy 2:1-10

Our goal is NOT to talk about politics or other churches.

Main Idea: Is the Bible outdated or our culture out of line?

I. The Urgency of Prayer | 1 Timothy 2:1-7

The primary concern of a Christian community is worship, and a significant part of worship is prayer, which is the focus of the first seven verses in 1 Timothy 2. The establishment of certain guidelines in the life of the church has for its primary purpose the correction and prevention of various kinds of doctrinal distortions. On the subject of prayer, there are four words used by Paul: “supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving” (v.1). Supplication points to asking God to supply the needs of the Christian community; intercession is praying to God on behalf of other people, particularly those who are not yet members of the community of faith (for all). Paul’s intention is not to make these terms exclusive from one another, as if one type of prayer was completely different from the others, nor does he want to limit the prayer life of the community to these four types of prayer; rather, he wants to encourage and urge the Christian community to offer to God all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people. And Paul describes this kind of prayer as “acceptable in the sight of God our Savior” (v.3).

Consider what kind of Christianity we have today. We often pray out of tradition or duty rather than as an essential aspect of the Christian life, and a tool to grow in sanctification and intimacy with God. **There is no point in the Christian life where we can be lax regarding prayer.** Paul was, before anything, a man of prayer. All the apostles were known for their prayer life. Great men and women of God must take prayer seriously, and they pray not only for themselves and their immediate families but for all. Paul explains that believers must pray for kings and all those in “high positions.” We would not be far off the mark to suggest that this duty to pray for the civil authorities, given to us by the Lord, is one of the most important ways we can serve those who govern our nations, states, and cities. Given the state of the world around us, we are quick to complain when political leaders fail at their jobs or promote injustice. Certainly, we should raise our voices when we confront such problems; however, it is not enough for us merely to protest. We must also pray for them. One way to start showing love to your neighbor is to pray for them! **Prayer should permeate every aspect of our lives. So, it should be no surprise that prayer should permeate the activities in the household of God.**

In verses 4-5, Paul highlights the fact that “God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. “For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (v.4-5). Let us consider two answers to these verses. First, if “all people” means everyone without exception, the Lord’s will is not ultimately done when people reject Him. Yet, the Greek word translated “all people” points to the understanding of all kinds of people—leaders, laymen, poor, rich, Jew, Gentile, and so on. **God’s desire for the salvation of all means there are no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation.** Second, if “all people” refers to every person to ever live without exception, then universalism is our conclusion, and all will be saved in the end. Since we know that is not true (Matthew 25:31-46) and that God is glorified when sin is punished, we conclude that God’s supreme desire is met even when people are not redeemed

To Ponder:

1. We live in a time when prayer has taken a back seat in the life of the church, how can we as a church change that?

2. Is prayer a vital part of your spiritual life? If not, what can you do to ensure prayer becomes a priority for you and your family?

II. The Posture of Women in the Church | 1 Timothy 2:8-10

Having already outlined the content of prayer (v.1-7), **Paul now begins to address the conduct of men and women in the church.** We must understand that these are direct instructions to the church, and that the Bible stands against the androgyny of the postmodern world. The Bible insists that gender is a God-given fact. It recognizes that **the identity of every human being is gender specific.** The differences between male and female go back to the sixth day of creation when: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen.1:27). Creation thus establishes the true equality of men and women: Both are created in the image of God. At the same time, the distinction between man and woman is divinely ordained by God. And it comes as no surprise, therefore, that God has special instructions for men and women, especially in the church.

The church is, as Paul describes in chapter 3, “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (v.15). Every household has its own rules. Throughout the Bible, men and women are addressed both jointly and separately. But when it comes to public worship, the Holy Spirit does not hesitate to say there are differences between men and women. Some instructions, while not inapplicable to women, are more necessary for men. Other instructions, although they have practical implications for men, are especially appropriate for women. **God is the one who established the ground rules for His household.** No topic has been so hotly debated in our time as the role of women in the church. Thomas Oden (American Theologian, 20th century) says, “This paragraph of Paul’s letter cannot be read without raising hackles and blood pressure.” This passage has drawn ministers and entire churches into conflict. If these verses seem out of touch with our contemporary culture, that is all the more reason to listen to what it says. **Which is more likely: that the Bible is outdated or that our culture is out of line?**

In many cases, the apostolic doctrines have been swept away by a storm of social and evangelical progressivism. Churches, schools, seminaries, and families are rapidly abandoning direct instructions from the Word of God. The main reason for changing the interpretation of passages like this has been, “But that was a different context.” **Here is the context of this passage: A local church had started to abandon God’s instructions for how the church should function.** Does that sound too ancient? Churches cannot simply abandon Biblical accuracy in favor of culture. **In a church like the one in Ephesus, plagued with false teaching and leaders, it is not surprising to find the struggle over gender roles.** Modesty in dress and conduct was commonly viewed as an important virtue of Christian women (1Pet. 3:1-6). Modesty concerning a woman’s external appearance and a focus on her inward character contrasted with the pagan practice of dressing up for public and pagan festivals in Ephesus. The decadent, extravagant styles of fashion in Rome quickly spread to the rest of the Greco-Roman world and found eager followers among women in Ephesus. The conjunction of “fancy hair and jewelry” was a sign of vanity and ungodliness. According to Paul, Christian women should take a different approach, focusing not on the external but on the internal. The problem Paul is addressing has to do with women putting their efforts and attention on themselves rather than on God. **Paul’s concern is for women to strive to be models of godliness and good works before they do anything else. When women follow the biblical pattern (established by God), His name is honored, and the gospel advances.**

To Ponder:

1. Have my views on gender and gender roles been primarily informed by culture or God’s Word?
2. Is my speech, dress, and attitudes a reflection of godliness or worldliness?