

Prayers

Opening prayer

In joy or in sorrow, in peace or in strife, in success or in failure, in pain or in liberty, may I hold on to You, Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my Redeemer. Deliver me from every thought, word and deed which might separate me from You, and protect me from the works of the Evil One, I pray: AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

General theme for the week: action

1. For yourself

Thank God that you are someone who can do God's work in this world, and worship the Lord with gratitude, looking forward to what will happen next in your life

2. For your friends and family

Give thanks to God for all that you do as a family and as friends; worship the Lord with a grateful heart, looking forward to all that lies ahead

3. For the church and its work

Praise the Lord for the work of the church, and worship the Lord with hope that revival will indeed come within the world in our day.

4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)

Worship the Lord with a heart full of praise for the many things God is doing in the world today. Praise Him for the many people being saved and for His work, through us, to liberate the oppressed and meet the needs of the poor

Meditation

Take my home and make it Yours,
Lord Jesus Christ, of no abode.

Take my work and use it for good,
Lord Jesus Christ, carpenter.

Take my family and help us love one another,
Lord Jesus Christ, born of Mary.

Take my friends and show us how to really care,
Lord Jesus Christ, inspirational leader of men.

Take my church and guide us aright,
Lord Jesus Christ, Rabbi, Teacher, Preacher.

Take all I have and show me its real value.
Lord Jesus Christ, creator and sustainer of the Universe

Bible Study

Bible passage – 1 Timothy 2:8-15

⁸ I would like men to pray everywhere, holding up holy hands without argument or dissent. ⁹ In the same way, women should present themselves with modesty and decency, and dress themselves with good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes; ¹⁰ but with those good deeds which are fitting for a woman who claims to be religious.

¹¹ A woman should learn quietly with all obedience, ¹² and I allow no woman to teach or have authority over a man but must remain quiet. ¹³ Adam was indeed formed first, then Eve, ¹⁴ and Adam was not led astray, but the woman was deceived and became the one who sinned; ¹⁵ but she will be saved through bearing children, if they remain in faith, love and holiness, with self-control.

Review

This is an awkward passage of Scripture! Here, Paul appears to express views that subordinate women, and this subject has become a source of great contention within almost every church; the passage is used to justify rejecting the teaching ministry of women in church. It seems to argue that women are secondary in God's creation (2:13,14), and this appears insurmountable for anyone who might wish to suggest a different way of understanding the text. However, this study challenges this traditional view because it is not consistent with the rest of scripture, which teaches that men and women are equal in God's sight. I have concluded that what Paul is describing here is a special instance in the life of the church, and once we understood this, the full meaning of the passage will become clear.

For example, Genesis 2 does not suggest that a man has a priority over his wife before God; indeed, it says that a man must make the greater sacrifice by leaving 'his father and mother (to) cling to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Gen 2:24). This scripture expresses the unity of man and woman in the image of God (see Gen 1:27) and it is a deep mystery of God (Eph 5:32). In addition, the New Testament witnesses that all are saved through faith in Christ alone, whether male or female, slave or free (see Gal. 3:28 etc.). The idea of women being saved 'through childbirth' (2:15) refers back to the curse of the fallen world described in Genesis 3:14-19, and not God's perfect world order. It would be utterly scandalous to suggest that women are saved in any other way than through the death and resurrection of Christ, so we must conclude that in this text, Paul quotes Genesis not to describe how women are saved, but to make a point about family responsibilities.

In order to understand this passage we must picture ourselves back in Paul's day, and imagine what it was like for men and women to worship God in the first century, for throughout 1 Timothy, Paul instructs Timothy about how to deal with what happened in the life of the church.

Firstly, for cultural rather than religious reasons, men and women were separated for worship as in a Jewish synagogue, with the worship led from where the men gathered. So when the men prayed, listened to Scripture and heard it expounded, their wives gathered separately, and without hearing what was going on in the men's meeting, they would have conversed. Now when the church began to grow, many women were filled with the Holy Spirit, and the result was that the women began to teach other women about what had happened to them. Sometimes, the controversy could cause some noise (see also 1 Cor 14:34f.)!

If you read what Paul says here in 1 Timothy with this picture in mind, it is clear that he was opposing this state of affairs. Indeed, he says that women should present themselves for worship like men (2:9,10) without regard to fashion. Secondly, women should learn with their husbands, not separately from them (2:12), and they should do so like the men, quietly and with 'all obedience' (2:11). Thirdly, there should be no need for noise if all worshipped together (2:12). Lastly, I suggest that what Paul was seeking was to avoid the situation where the separate teaching of women by women was given more prominence than the exposition of Scriptures in the assembly, conducted normally in that culture, by men (2:12). His aim was not to prevent women from teaching or being given authority to teach, but having a situation where the teaching of anyone was held in regard 'over' and above another. Scripture testifies to the authority of what is taught lying in the Word, and not the teacher. The one who teaches exercises a gift and was responsible for it, as we will discover in reading the rest of 1 Timothy. Certainly, if we assume that teaching is a matter of exercising authority by anyone, we have forsaken a Biblical model of teaching for a worldly one!

Paul undoubtedly asks women to be quiet and learn with submission, but this is hardly different from what he would say to men if they were making a noise and not listening to the preached word of God. By saying all this to women because of the cultural conditions of the day, what Paul says sound chauvinist to us today, but I do not believe that this was his intention. Paul's main point is that what happens in church should be 'without argument and dissent' (1:8).

If you wish to discover more about the subject of women in the church, then please check out my studies on Ephesians 5:21f. and 1 Corinthians 11:1f.

Discipleship

Questions for groups

1. What is your opinion about whether women should be allowed to preach in the pulpit of a church?
2. In the light of this passage of scripture, are there any conditions attached to men and women being equal in the sight of God?
3. Discuss whether you agree with the author's opinion that Paul was advocating the removal of barriers in worship rather than creating them.

Discipleship challenges

- *What view does your church take on the role of women in leadership or preaching in the church? Pray fervently for the church because it is severely split over this.*
- *Submit your own feelings about this passage to the Lord, whether you are a man or a woman, and allow God to reveal His will about these issues.*

Final Prayer

Jesus, be our guide. Help us understand how Your grace has worked throughout past years; touch us with Your loving hand as we work through the joys and trials of the present; and give us confidence in You for the future You have prepared for us. Thank You Jesus; AMEN
