

A Godly Ordering of the Sexes

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Date: 14 October 2018

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning. Once again, we're in 1 Timothy, Paul's first letter to Timothy, page 991, if you have one of the church visitors' Bibles. And we're looking this morning at the second half of chapter 2, but we'll read in from chapter 1 and verse 18.

Paul writing to Timothy and to be read publicly by the whole church, or the churches, the house fellowships in Ephesus, where there are many problems which need to be put right and many leaders who need to be put out.

And so Paul is writing to make very clear to all in the church the authority that Timothy has and the authority that he must exert to reorder the church in God's appointed pattern.

So chapter 1, verse 18, Paul says, This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.

By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of the faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, that is, put out of the church, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

[1 : 1 9] First of all, therefore, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people, including kings, for all in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

This is good. And it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

For this, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I'm telling the truth, I'm not lying. A teacher of the Gentiles of all the nations, in faith and truth.

I desire then that in every place, the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. Likewise also that women should adorn themselves with respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness, with good works.

Let a woman learn quietly, peaceably, with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.

[2 : 4 6] Rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Yet she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. Well, let's turn to 1 Timothy 2, and verses 8 to 15 that we're looking at.

It's all about a godly ordering of the sexes. When the church begins to deviate from the straight path of biblical truth, it is immediately in danger.

It's heading for the rocks. And that's a perennial danger for the church in every age. That's why these letters are in our Bibles. They're preserved by God for the church today, so that we will learn from what's written to them then.

[3 : 52] But it is God's word for us today. And the church fellowships in Ephesus were needing rescuing urgently from a dangerous path.

We saw last week that their whole outlook, as it were, had become an in-look. They were becoming exclusive, elitist, taken up with themselves, totally forgetting that God's revelation is above all a revelation of salvation for the world, for the whole world outside.

And so as we saw last time, Paul's first priority for turning the church away from the rocks is calling them back to urgent prayer for all people and to unrestricted proclamation of the gospel to all people, all driven by the Savior's universal passion for all people.

Only then will the church be what it's called to be in chapter 3, verse 15, a pillar, a buttress of truth in this world. The church had to regain that godly outlook on the world.

But as well as the church's outlook turning inwards, if you like, the false teaching had also led to ungodly disorder in the relationships between the sexes in the church.

[5 : 07] They had turned God's created order upside down. And that too was a deeply damaging situation for the church to be in. There was confusion about proper behavior for men and women in the church and also a corruption of God's own rules for men and women.

And that was endangering the lives of Christians. It was endangering the leadership of the whole church. And Paul was deeply concerned. He's concerned, as always, for the reputation of the church with outsiders, with decent pagan people.

And it was at risk because of this. He says in chapter 5, verse 14, Satan was finding great opportunity to slander the church. And he was concerned that the preservation of the true gospel was at risk because the reversal of God's given order for leadership leads to Satan's deception gaining sway.

And that's evident all through this letter. And he was concerned, therefore, that people's salvation was at risk. However difficult verse 15 might be here, what is very clear is that Paul wants women to be saved, to endure in faith and love and holiness, to take hold of the eternal life at the appearance of the Lord Jesus, not to do as some had done, as chapter 5, verse 15 says, go straying after Satan into apostasy, losing their salvation.

Now, it may seem to us today that these matters of a proper ordering of the sexes cannot possibly be such a serious matter, especially since we live in an era when there is so much preoccupation with overturning what the world has seen to be a repressive and a patriarchal attitude in the past.

[6 : 57] But I think, rather, what that simply shows us is that we need to listen very carefully to God, our Creator, because we might very well inadvertently be in danger ourselves of shipwreck in just the same way as the churches in Ephesus.

Because we, too, breathe the air of the world round about and far more than we ever realize. Because Paul is very clear here, just as he is and all the apostles are and the Lord Jesus himself is, that God's people must submit to God's good and healthy created order in matters of sexuality and of gender and not seek to supplant it with what we might consider to be a better way or a more enlightened way or a more equal way or whatever.

To do that is not enlightened according to the Bible. In fact, it's the very essence of evil. It's not to be more relevant and de rigueur.

It's simply to be rebellious and to be deceived by Satan himself. We just can't get away from the fact that Genesis 3 makes clear and Paul quotes that here in verse 14.

And Romans 1 reiterates very powerfully that rebellion against the creator, turning the truth of God into lies and worshipping the creature instead of the creator, goes along with and is expressed by a rebellion against God's created order for the sexes.

[8 : 28] That order of male and female together together expressing fulsome and complimentary human wholeness. And is that serious? And if the church doesn't recognize that error and repent of it, Paul says, it will be heading for the rocks.

And the more it rebels against the creator's order, the quicker it will find around the rocks and the further it will sink into the waters of the world round about and become submerged and incapable of saving itself or of saving anybody else.

So like in all the New Testament letters, God's authoritative teaching for the church is here. It's written to them then in Ephesus, but it is just as authoritative for us today.

And it could hardly be more relevant, could it? Given the utter confusion in our society around the whole area of sex and gender. Genderology seems to be like the new Scientology.

It's the cult religion of the elites and the stars in our culture. But it's being propagated everywhere, isn't it? With the extreme zeal of what I think you can only call religious fanaticism.

[9 : 39] Well, ancient Ephesus too was a culture dominated by sexuality, by female sexuality. A vast temple in its midst of Artemis, Diana, the god of love.

Female priestesses, a cult of female sexuality and great female power. So it's not surprising that that culture met the church with all sorts of challenges. But of course the false teachers too had added to it in confusing and corrupting the church.

Their teaching, remember, was that the resurrection has already happened and so already we're living in the new creation. Perhaps they meant that therefore there was now no distinction any longer between the sexes.

Perhaps they interpreted Jesus' words about there being no marriage in heaven as meaning, well, there should be no marriage now, only celibacy, no childbearing and so on. It seems very likely also that the false teachers had a perverse and a wrong view of Genesis.

That they were teaching that man came from woman and not vice versa. That perhaps marriage itself or the submission of a wife to a husband was all a part and parcel of the fall, not part of God's good creation.

[10 : 53] And therefore now that should be reversed. There should be no distinctives remaining. Maybe that's why also they were teaching that you shouldn't eat meat and only vegetables to be like it was before the fall.

And of course, that's why Paul has to refute that very clearly in chapter 4. So all in all, there was all sorts of corruption and confusion in the church. There were men behaving badly, as we've seen, full of all sorts of anger and quarreling.

And the false leaders were setting them an example in that. Remember in chapter 1, verse 7, Paul says they were ignorant men, but they were very arrogant. They were very assertive of their views. They're very antithesis. Of what we'll see next time in chapter 3 is the quiet dignity of proper leadership.

And then there were women behaving badly. Read chapter 5 and you'll see there were self-indulgent women, many of them wealthy, but instead of using their wealth for their own families or for the good of the church, it seems that they were supporting and funding these false leaders.

And thereby, as chapter 2, verse 11 here shows us, they themselves were getting into to quarrel some disputes with the proper church leaders and they were disrupting the church. They were using their wealth to assert their own power and their own influence over the men.

[12 : 08] And so, to confront this, Paul addresses first men's behavior with one another in verse 8, and then women's behavior with one another, verses 9 and 10, and then together how men and women are to relate properly to one another in the authority and leadership and life of the church.

And in each case, he is showing us the creator's better way. The quiet dignity and not the quarrelsome disruption in the ordering of male and female relationships in the life of Christian people and in the leadership of the church.

Now, what Paul says here in these verses is very clear. It's not at all complicated, but of course, it is highly counter-cultural today, just as it was, by the way, in Ephesus. And it confronts many deep, plain-grained attitudes now in our contemporary Western culture, which is why some, of course, have gone to great lengths to change these very plain words, as though Paul was not saying what he really means or not meaning what he really says.

Some, of course, just dismiss Paul's words altogether and say, well, Paul is plain wrong. We can disregard him. Others who want to be saying that they're taking the Bible much more seriously, they nevertheless go to extraordinary contortions to explain it all away as though it was all utterly specific only to this very particular situation at that time and place.

And therefore, well, it's not relevant any longer today. But although, of course, we always have to take note of the context of any letter, if we start to say that some parts, therefore, because they're addressing specific issues, are therefore not pertinent today, then we're going to find that every single part of every letter in the New Testament is addressing a specific situation and therefore is equally irrelevant to the church today.

[14 : 02] But not so, says the Scriptures. These are the Scriptures. Thus speaks the Lord to us today. In fact, perhaps the greatest irony is that those feminist interpreters who most want to tie Paul's words only to that very specific context in Ephesus.

They say, well, yes, of course, it was an apostolic word. It had to be heeded. But it was only for then when there was a culture of rampant feminism, when there was strident women taking over in all the churches, when the churches were becoming feminized, when the churches were full of false teaching and myths and so on.

Well, have a look around in the mainstream churches today in the 21st century in the West and you will see that that is precisely the culture that we live in. So even if those interpreters are right and they're wrong, but even if they were, this word would apply just as urgently today in the Western world as it did in Ephesus.

But in fact, what Paul is doing in this letter as everywhere else is simply applying principles that are consistent all through the Bible to a church that's very confused and that needs to get clear on the godly ordering of the sexes to know what quiet, dignified Christianity really looks like for men and women in church life and in leadership.

And he addresses both men and women in this passage, although it's mostly women. He goes on to talk about men more in chapter 3. So let's look then at verses 8 to 15 in a little more detail. First verse 8.

[15 : 41] Paul addresses here the anger and the aggression of men. And he says that godly men are known for praying with one another, not for punching one another.

He's saying that men's tendency to self-promotion through aggression and through fighting is not to hinder their holiness, which is to be marked by them taking a lead in serving the church in all kinds of prayer.

I desire therefore that in every place the men should pray lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. Now that phrase in every place is Paul's way of referring to every church.

Not just Ephesus as he says in 1 Corinthians 1. To all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This command is simply part of what it means in chapter 3 verse 15 to behave as the household of God.

This is proper church life wherever you are. And it's a specific command here for a reason of course because it wasn't happening. And he's calling people back to what ought to be happening to what is standard Christian behavior for men in every place.

[16 : 59] Standing and lifting hands in prayer that was the common posture in the Jewish temple and in the synagogue. Think of Jesus' story in Luke 18 about the Pharisee and the sinner standing and the Pharisee standing and expatiating with his long and proud prayers and the sinner beating his breast and asking for mercy.

Not the posture that's the important thing here. It's the purity of the prayer that's offered. You can have all the outward ritual Paul is saying but your prayer can't be pure and holy if the hands that you lift up have just been lifted up in anger and quarreling and selfish ambition.

But it's holy lips expressing the humble prayer of holy hearts. That's what God wants. The prayer of peaceable, quiet, godly, dignified lives that he talked about in verse 2.

Not angry people, not quarrelsome people, not the kind of men who are jockeying for position and for self-promotion in the church, but that's what have been going on. Lots of arrogant men.

Do you remember chapter 1 verse 7? Confident, arrogant talkers but actually Paul says quite ignorant. Men who wanted their prayers to be heard by others to sound impressive are no doubt speaking very loudly in that way.

[18 : 19] Paul says no, they're just like the hypocrites Jesus spoke of in Matthew chapter 6. Not so with you. Real prayer is not for others, it's not for self-promotion, it's directed to our Father in heaven.

Holy prayer is humble towards God and humble towards other people. It's just not compatible, is it, with an angry and quarrelsome spirit. Notice that Paul's telling us real holiness is relational.

It's the very opposite of sanctimonious religiosity. It banishes anger and quarreling over abstruse matters of theology, unhealthy controversy and so on.

A real holiness in the heart leads not to pugilism, not to punching, but to prayer. Real holiness unites men in prayer.

Hands held out humbly together to God, not hands fighting haughtily against one another. Why is this a word to men in every place, in every church?

[19 : 24] Well, precisely because in our sinful pride and ambition, men like to fix things, don't we? We like to assert ourselves against others. We like to lead by doing.

But we need to learn that holy men also need to humble themselves before God. We need to look to God. We need to remember that we are not the creator of all things and we can't fix everything. We need to look to God to answer our needs.

We need to come to Him and know that without Him we can do nothing. And that's the key aspect that men are to give leadership in prayer whether it's in the home or in the church.

Some men are sometimes reticent in this because maybe they find it hard to feel confident in their words or their speech or so on. It's not eloquence that God wants though, is it?

It's holy humility. Remember the story in Luke 18. The tax collector had only seven words in prayer and Jesus said He was the one that was heard in heaven not the endless lines of the Pharisee.

[20 : 30] In your home life men, if you're married and if you have a family, what your wife and what your children need to hear isn't eloquence, it's just humility and reverence for the Lord.

Not angry quarrelsome prayers, but quiet dignified dependence on the Lord. That's what they need to hear from you. I remember when I was a very small boy, I couldn't have been more than maybe four or five, went into my father's study one Sunday morning and there he was on his knees by his armchair in prayer.

I can see it still today, it's imprinted on my mind, never left me. And I saw that the leader of our household was a man under authority, a man who humbled himself before a holy God in prayer.

There's no greater thing that you can do as a father than that, especially for boys who are going to grow into men. And to show them your holy hands or your holy knees in prayer that way.

And there's no more important thing for the church as a whole. Certainly, men cannot lead in the church if they don't lead in that kind of prayer. If they don't exemplify to all, not haughty and macho self-seeking talk, but humble and truly masculine God-seeking prayer.

[21 : 48] That's what speaks of hearts that are not angry and quarrelsome, but that are peaceable and godly and dignified in every way, not seeking to be served, but to serve God and his fellow brothers and sisters.

That's God's command for men in every place. We better listen. Well, in verses 9 and 10, Paul turns from the anger and aggression of men to address the attire and the adornment of women.

And he says that godly women are known by their loving works, not by their lavish wardrobes. Women's tendency to self-promotion through vanity and through flaunting themselves to each other and also to men, that's not to hinder their holiness, which for them is to be marked by them taking a lead in what?

In loving good works, says Paul. Likewise, verse 9, women should adorn themselves, not with gold and pearls and cost their attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness, true Christianity, with good works.

And likewise, in verse 9, links it to verse 8, it applies to every place, just the same. So again, Paul is confronting a particular problem here in Ephesus among women, but he's calling them back to behavior that is proper in every place, says the household of god, every Christian church.

[23 : 18] And the problem here in Ephesus clearly involved women. Chapter 5, verse 7, says women were behaving in self-indulgent ways. Chapter 5, verse 13, tells us they were behaving like idle busybodies.

They were going around saying things they shouldn't be saying. They were gossiping. They were harming the church. And clearly, they were influential in a very bad way. And part of that influence was through their ostentatious and impressive dress.

And all in all, it was improper, says Paul, for women who profess godliness, true Christianity. And he's rebuking them. He's calling them back to what is normal, proper Christian behavior for women in every place, in every church.

So what is proper and improper for Christian women in terms of their attire and adornment? Well, verse 9, not braided hair, gold or pearls or costly attire. Now, before you start looking around and see who's got pleats in their hairs this morning or who's wearing pearls, just listen.

Don't be looking out for those Prada dresses. We all know those are the ones the devil wears. But just listen to some sane words from the 16th century from John Calvin, the reformer.

[24 : 30] It's not that jewels of gold are completely forbidden, but where there is a shining display of them, they tend to bring with them all the evils which spring from self-obsession and unchastity.

Okay? It's gosh and showy and deliberately ostentatious displays that the apostle is against. Things that express an attitude that is quite wrong, that is immodest, that is unwholesome, and that is unsubmissive to God's rule over our lives.

Look at verse 9 and 10 and listen to these words from Peter's first letter, speaking also to women. Peter says, don't let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, the putting on of clothing, but let your adorning be the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

Those are the jewels God wants to see, he says. Now that parallel tells us two things very clearly. First, this is standard apostolic teaching. It's not just for this one particular place in Ephesus, is it?

Peter writes the same. And secondly, as Calvin says, it's not banning all jewelry or nice hairstyles or nice clothes. It can't be, can it? Otherwise, Peter is banning women all clothing altogether.

[25 : 51] Let not your adorning be the putting on of clothes. Is he advocating nudism? I don't think so. He's just saying, isn't he, that there's far more to feminine beauty than mere jewels and clothes.

And he's also saying that those latter things, if used wrongly, can cast an ugly shadow that veils the true beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit which God values.

And that's what's improper for a Christian woman in every place, he says. Paul is rebuking ostentatious, showy displays of female adornment, a kind of power dressing and provocative dressing for a purpose.

Whether that purpose is to intimidate other women, make them feel inferior, or to jockey with men and to assert themselves over men, or indeed to entice men sexually and gain power over them that way.

That's what he's against. All the books and the scholars tell us that in that culture the things specifically mentioned here were the huge things in terms of wealth and status in that day.

[26 : 55] Those were the things that were like having a two million dollar Prada handbag or Hermes handbag on your arm today. And the point is, you see, inward attitude expresses itself in our outward demeanor.

And that's true for women and it's true for men. And the wardrobe can be a big part of that armory for a woman, just as a man's fist can be for him, either for good or for ill.

So Paul is not denying women all feminine fashion. He's warning them against feminist ferocity. He's not saying to Christian women, don't look beautiful, don't dress beautifully.

Goodness, the Bible rejoices in feminine beauty. The whole climax of the story of the Bible is in Revelation 21 when we see the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband.

Don't get this wrong. The Bible is not saying godly women are to be frumpish, far less freakish. Don't go out of your way to try and be dowdy and dull and unfeminine. Sometimes some Christian women have got that crazy idea.

[28 : 02] Reminds me of a story back in the 1950s when Billy Graham was in this country and at that time among certain evangelical women in this country, makeup was a sign of ungodliness.

But dancing was all perfectly fine whereas in America dancing was a sign of ungodliness and makeup was perfectly fine. And one rather prim British lady said to Mr. Graham, Mr.

Graham, what do you think about makeup? And he looked at her and replied, well yes ma'am, I think you probably could use a little. It's not feminine beauty that Paul is rebuking but it is female brazenness.

He wants women to adorn themselves beautifully with femininity but with decency as women who are devoted to God. Not with decadence women who are serving their own ends.

Whether that is to domineer over others or to devour others. It's just a perfectly obvious behavior for any decent Christian woman who professes true godliness, who professes true Christian discipleship.

[29 : 13] Once again, John Calvin says, without doubt, the dress of an honorable and godly woman ought to be different from a harlot. That's all Paul's saying. And so just like men, women need to take care not to misuse their God-given strength.

It's not physical strength like men's fists but they do have sexual strength to exert girl power in the wrong way. And clothes and decoration and so on, they're part of that, aren't they, for a woman?

Remember that at the beginning in Genesis 3, God gave clothing to human beings after the fall for modesty, for decency. So women's clothes are not to demean them but they are to dignify them in the sight of God and in the sight of other people.

Not to make them dowdy, certainly not to disfigure them, as most people I think would say that the burka and so on does today, dehumanizing women, but rather clothes are to display God's own God-given beauty but in such a way as not to wrongly promote vanity or to assert power or procure sexually in the wrong place and in the wrong way.

So it's alright ladies to keep next and Marks and Spencers and New Look and so on, keep them in the black, but just don't forget modesty and self-control. Good sense and judgment matters to God.

[30 : 40] Matters in your wardrobe, matters in front of your mirror. I see there's a huge Victoria Secret store opened up just round the road. I was rather aghast as I walked past the angels in the window last week. Well, I'm sure your husband will be delighted if you go in there.

Just don't come to the church prayer meeting dressed like a Victoria's Secret angel. The adornment of Christian women is not to be provocative in the wrong ways.

That's what the apostle is saying. But it is, he says, notice, to be proactive in the right way. End of verse 10. They, he says, the women are to take a lead in adorning themselves with good works.

That's a phrase that Paul uses more than 14 times in these pastoral letters. But here, and especially in chapter 5, devotion to every good work is to be an area that women take a real lead in, in the church.

And there's a great power in that witness. Peter, do you remember, he says that a Christian woman can even win over her non-Christian husband by her behavior. Because that's a way that will shine out the beauty of God in this dark world.

[31 : 50] An attitude in all things is what he's talking about, in men and in women. Not of self-promotion, not of self-assertion, but of submission to God and of service to his church.

To be peaceful, quiet, dignified, modest, self-controlled people. That's how to behave, he says, in the Christian church in every place. And of course, all of that is closely linked then with what Paul goes on to say in verses 11 to 15, where he speaks about the attitude to authority of both men and women in the church.

Godly men and women, he says, are content to embrace the God-given creator's order for authority in the church and not to seek to exchange it for another as creatures usurping the creator.

Listen carefully. The sole authority in God's church in every place is the word of God. And that authority is to be exercised over the whole church by men who are recognized as being gifted to teach and who are qualified to do so, not through quarrelsome self-promotion, but through the quiet dignity that is required to enable others to submit contentedly to God's will over them.

And that authority is to be recognized and submitted to, says Paul, by all. With women not desiring for themselves responsibilities that God has declared only men should shoulder, that is, teaching with authority over the church, nor despising for themselves roles and responsibilities that God has made only them as women to be capable of, including child bearing and all the other things that are unique to womanhood.

[33 : 42] In a nutshell, that is what Paul is saying here. And it's very clearly said. Let me point out a few things. Paul is continuing here his instruction to women.

He's showing what adorning yourself with good works looks like. And the first thing he says is to learn quietly with all submission. He's saying that women are to be full receivers of the truth of God, the salvation in Jesus.

That marks them out, by the way, from their contemporary Jewish other women who weren't allowed into the center courts of the temple or the synagogue with the men, just as Muslim women are not today.

But he is saying that that emancipation of women in Christ is not to be misconstrued. Verse 11, they're to have a godly, quiet, peaceable spirit, not an argumentative and disputing one, as indeed everyone is to have, as he said in verse 2.

And part of that spirit for women, Paul says, means verse 12, not to try to usurp the role of men in teaching. I do not permit that strong apostolic authority.

[34 : 52] I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. Paul is not here, notice, not forbidding all teaching to women.

That's very plain in these letters alone. He tells older women to teach their juniors in Titus chapter 2 and their children. He speaks about Timothy himself, having been taught the faith by his own mother, by his own grandmother.

Elsewhere we see Paul telling us about women like Aquila, along with Priscilla and Aquila, who together taught even the great evangelist Apollos. In Colossians 3, all Christians are told that we're to teach one and other in all sorts of ways in the church.

So this has got nothing to do with women's competence. No, Paul says it's got everything to do with men and women's creation. And we'll see that in verses 13 and 14.

Secondly, the context here is clearly the assembled congregation of the whole church, where women, together with all the other men, men, are to learn the word of God and to receive it and to submit to it as the word of God with authority, which is applied to the church as God's word to his people.

[36 : 09] The word by which the good shepherd leads his flock and keeps us all safe on the road to salvation. We are all to submit to the word of God in the church.

Submission to God's word, that's the foundational response of life to faith in God. We submit to Christ's word in the gospel in obedient faith. And we submit in our lives to God's way in everything, in all things, in the order that he has made as our sovereign creator.

That's what it means to walk in the light as children of light, no longer in the way of darkness of those who do not submit to God. That's what Paul wrote to the Ephesian church some years earlier. Instead, he says we are all to submit to God and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

A voluntary submission to God's order in all things gladly because we love and we respect God. And that submission takes different forms in different relationships.

Wives, Paul says, to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. Children obey their parents in the Lord. Servants obey their earthly masters as to Christ.

[37 : 21] And so we're to submit to God's ordering in all things. And similarly here in his divine ordering for the leadership in his church in every place.

All, he says, are to submit to what in verse 12, look at it, he's really calling authoritative teaching. The word teaching and authority there is inextricably linked. It is the public transmission of authoritative material, says one scholar.

It is the task of conveying authoritative instruction in a congregational setting, says another. It's what Paul says Titus must do in Titus 2.15. 15, declare, exhort, rebuke with all authority.

Let no one disregard you. So what Paul does not permit in any place, in any church, is for a woman to occupy the position in the church that involves permanent ruling functions over men.

Those are reserved for males. Says Andreas Kostenberg, probably the foremost scholar anywhere on these letters. And since the rule of God is exerted in the church through the transmission of his authoritative word, the scriptures, the Bible, then what he's talking about here is principally congregational preaching and teaching.

[38 : 47] And Paul does not permit a woman to have that charge, to have responsibility for a whole church in its entirety, holding the office of overseer, of presbyter, which is principally the office of preaching and teaching, applying authoritatively the word of God to all of us, including to the preacher.

There's very, very little debate among the scholars that that is precisely what Paul means here. The only debate is that some try very hard to say that, well, it's only utterly specific to this very particular situation, and therefore it doesn't apply universally as where in the church.

But friends, despite heroic efforts by some, that just simply cannot be sustained. Let me just quote one other place in the New Testament where Paul speaks about this. As in all the churches of the saints, the women are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law also says, for it's shameful for a woman to teach in church.

If anyone thinks he's spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you, says the apostle, are a command of God. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized by Christ's apostle himself.

1 Corinthians 14. I mean, I think that ought to be enough to make us very clear. He's talking about the church in every place. Don't misunderstand, though.

[40 : 17] Don't overshoot. Paul is not denying, as I've said, teaching roles to all women in every place in the church. He encourages many such, as I've said. It doesn't mean that no women can ever teach a man anything useful about the Bible.

That's ridiculous. Of course they do. There are many fine female scholars, many fine authors, many fine hymn writers, and so on. Many ways in which women can teach men, but not in that authoritative place in the life of the local church.

Nor is Paul either denying women any place in the decision-making process in the church, any more than he's denying a wife in marriage any place in the discussions and decision-makings that are made as a couple in marriage.

Of course not. But the role of publicly transmitting the authoritative word of God as the word of God, the word to be heeded and obeyed by all.

That is a responsibility that God has reserved for a man. And not just any man. It needs to be said a man has proved himself able and gifted to do that with all authority.

[41 : 26] Able to not only teach but also rebuke and to be refusing to be disregarded and so on. Why is that? Well it's not because of some situation-specific issue in these churches.

Rather, Paul says, it is because of the universal truth of God's created order and of the very nature of the heart of human rejection of God's rule.

Verse 13, Paul appeals to creation. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. God's created order in Genesis chapter 2 only became very good when the female was formed from man to be a complementary helper to man.

But verse 14, all of that went wrong, didn't it? Precisely because that creation order was rejected. The woman was deceived and became a transgressor, leading both the man and the woman to disaster.

Paul's not saying that women are more gullible than men. That's not the point. Although it was Eve that was deceived. And actually I think, if we think about it, I think men and women do sin in subtly different ways.

[42 : 39] Men do tend to sin more defiantly and more openly, not really caring what other people think. Women often sin, I think, in a more hidden way because they care very deeply what other people think of them.

But the real point here is that both sinned by deserting their true role. The woman took the lead from the man and the man was glad to give the lead to the woman.

That is what led the human race to catastrophe. And Paul's point is very simple, isn't it? When God's created order is reversed, when man and women allow their roles to become confused and corrupted, Satan will do great harm in the world.

And Satan will do great harm if that happens in the church. And that is exactly what was happening in these churches. The devil and the demon's deception is mentioned several times in these chapters.

People were being deceived by demons. People were straying after Satan. It's that serious. And friends, we can hardly doubt the truth of that today in the Western church, can we?

[43 : 45] Go back 50 years and the push in the mainstream churches in this country was for the reversal of exactly this role. Ordaining women as presbyters, as leaders of churches.

And not only has the result of that been that our national churches have become feminized, dominated by women, marked by the absence, in most cases, of men. But the next push was what?

To overturn the Creator's distinction between proper sexual relationships. So the sexual perversion that is rife in the world is now also being welcomed in the church and even among leaders of the church.

And already, where has the push gone? The blurring and totally confusing, even the biological distinctions between male and female. And the transgenderist ideology that's so rife all around us in our culture already is taking hold even in the churches.

And many churches, as a result, are on the rocks already, beyond salvage. Don't go that way, is what Paul is simply saying to us here.

[44 : 57] And he is saying, verse 15, women, there is no need to push that way. God has not made women as inferior beings who can only redeem themselves by trying to become men.

Not at all. Women share the same salvation as men, he says here, if they continue just as men, in faith and love and holiness. As women.

Embracing their womanhood, not by rejecting their womanhood. There was teaching going around in these churches, wasn't there? Against marriage, against child rearing and so on. So of course, women were trying to seek identity for themselves in other ways.

To be valued in other ways. As teachers, as leaders in the church, and so on. No, says Paul. Rejoice in being who you are. Rejoice in being women. God made men and women together to glorify him as complementary beings.

And the redemption that we have in Christ doesn't obliterate those distinctions. It redeems them and makes them beautiful again. The grudging submission of women to men.

[46 : 06] And men's often sinful exploitation of women. That becomes in Christ quite different. A glad submission to one another in mutual service. Men as men. Leading as God called them to lead.

So that all together can serve Christ in the distinctive ways that God has designed for us to do so. Which for women, verse 15, includes child bearing.

A wonderful reality. A glorious reality that only, even with all our technology still, only a woman can fulfill. It should never be thought of as inferior or less valuable to God.

Of course, not all women will marry and not all women will become mothers. But child bearing here really just is shorthand for all the roles and the responsibilities that are unique to womanhood, including the bearing of children.

Let women be women, Paul is saying, and rejoice in their role. That is your road to salvation. That's what he's saying. You'll be saved that way.

[47 : 07] Just as Timothy in chapter 4, verse 16, he says, if you look out for yourself and your teaching, you also will save yourself and your heroes. That's your road to salvation. As you teach God's word and as you and everybody else submit to it truly.

You see, friends, this is certainly countercultural teaching in our world today. But it is God's teaching for a better way.

It is for the very best way of male and female sexuality. Together displaying the truth of God's pattern for healthy humanity, for complete humanity. And far from hindering women's wholeness, it helps to fulfill it.

And it helps the church to be a true pillar and buttress of this truth in our world. Adorning the doctrine of God our Savior. Showing the world a better way. Showing them the best way. In both marriage and in family life and home life and in church life alike.

That doesn't mean that we have to be a church that's always and always going on about this. becoming a sort of single issue church. Obsessing all the time about men's roles and women's roles and getting into legalistic knots about whether you can do this or that or the next thing.

[48 : 28] There are churches like that. I would not want to be in one of them. No, no, no. But far, far better just to exhibit that healthy human wholeness in Christ.

In our corporate life, in our ministry, in our home lives. a way of accepting God's ordering that rejoices in that good created order.

That he has redeemed us to show to this world. To give a lead on the way of human health and flourishing both sexually and spiritually. That's what we're called together to.

It's not easy. It's a challenge in our world. So let me finish by quoting a female scholar whom I find very, very helpful indeed and learned gladly from.

She says, The battle for women in our day is to accept God's wisdom in this and be content with it when our entire culture has taught us not to be. The battle for men as it was in Genesis 3 is to step up to the sort of leadership Paul has in mind when our entire culture insists that women are the real go-to men and the men and boys have little to contribute beyond being the butt of jokes.

[49 : 43] That's the challenge. Men and women. Living out God's godly ordering of the sexes. It's a battle today.

It's going to get harder. But friends, it is a battle worth fighting to show the world a better way. To show the world the truth of God our Savior who wants all people, men and women, to come to a knowledge of the truth and to find the saving joy in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Well, let's pray. God our Father, our Creator, and our Lord who made us in your own image as men and women to shine forth in this world every facet of your divine creativity and beauty and strength and gentleness and joy and submission.

we pray that you would fill our hearts with your own Holy Spirit of glad acceptance of your word that we might find in Christ our true identity as human beings, men and women as you have created us to be and in following you in the way of our Lord Jesus Christ increasingly know every day the joy of being who we are in your sight and of showing that to this world.

May we be as a church here a pillar and buttress of your truth adorning the doctrine of God our Savior banishing quarrelsome unsubmitiveness and instead showing the beauty of a quiet and godly and dignified spirit in every way in every place to the glory of Christ our Savior and for the salvation of many whom you long to see saved.

[51 : 58] Help us Lord we pray as the battle rages around us grant us your grace for we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen of Amen the but and the light 7 and the glory