

The Seventh Sunday in Martyrs' Tide, September 18, 2022

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In the Church as Male and Female

1 Timothy 2:1–15

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:2

Our text from First Timothy chapter two. St. Paul writes: **First of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people. . . . I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or quarreling. . . . Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve** (vv 1, 8, 11–13).

The first thing to say is something pretty obvious:
Human beings come in two kinds—male and female.

That's not an accident.

That's not a bug or a flaw in the Creation.

And it's certainly not a problem needing to be fixed.

Male and female is a design feature.

It's how God made humanity from the beginning,
all the way back in Genesis, where it says:

**So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.** (Gen 1:27)

Male and female—created alike in God's image, and yet distinct and different.

And it doesn't take a theologian, it doesn't take divine revelation
to begin to see the differences.

All it takes is an ultrasound.

With an ultrasound the differences are obvious even before birth,
and those differences go right down to the cellular level and your genetic code.

So each of us has been created by God as an embodied soul—
embodied as either male or female.

I.

But why make such a big deal about male and female, you might ask?
Why focus on something that may cause us to cringe
or even create controversy?

Because St. Paul makes a big deal of it.
He makes a big deal of it in First Timothy.

The background is this:

St. Paul is in his later years.

His death is right around the corner—no more than two or three years away.

He's writing to a young pastor, Timothy,
whom he mentored and ordained, and to his congregation.

He knows that his time is short.

He also knows that there will be problems in the church,
problems with teaching and among pastors and people.

So he's writing to give helpful instructions regarding church practices,
to give encouragement to those who lead the Church,
and to provide sound teaching for young and old, for men and women.

Pay attention to what he says about your particular callings in life.

Paul begins this letter with a warning.

He instructs Timothy

to **charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine** (1 Tim 1:3).

You can hear behind that a worry that St. Paul has,

a concern that people will come teaching things that are false,
and that in doing so they will lead people astray or to depart from the faith.

We don't know many specifics about the different doctrines being taught,
but we get a hint from what Paul writes.

It may sound strange, but he mentions that certain people **forbid marriage**
and **require abstinence from foods created by God** (1 Tim 4:3).

Marriage and food created by God to be received with thanksgiving.

Things called "good" by God,

yet these false teachers seem to have a problem with those things.

So it's not necessarily surprising that St. Paul would also express concern
about the role of men and women.

Notice that St. Paul deliberately addresses this topic.

He doesn't shy away from it.

Men's and women's roles, it seems, were under attack—
certainly from our fallen nature and possibly by false teachers as well.

St. Paul addresses these things in the context of prayer, worship,
and order in the Church.

He's talking about how we live together as Christians

He says, **First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions,
and thanksgiving be made for all people** (v 1).

While urging prayer for all people,

St. Paul then takes up the discussion of the particular roles of men and women.

He addresses the men first (men, listen up!).

He says:

**I desire then that in every place the men should pray,
lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling** (v 8).

The very fact that he says this suggests that there's a problem.

Men should pray,

but it sounds like they're more apt to argue and dispute, to create conflicts;
they're better at getting angry and quarreling.

St. Paul says that such actions have no place in the Church.

They are at odds with what men are called to do—

to lift holy hands and so lead the congregation in prayer for all people.

It was impossible then—and still is!—to quarrel and pray at the same time.

Try it—it doesn't work.

St. Paul also addresses the women:

I desire **likewise also that women should adorn themselves**

in 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 with all submissiveness.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man;

rather, she is to remain quiet (vv 9–12).

You can hear in this passage two things tied together—

on the one hand, he speaks about the appearance and conduct of women
and, on the other hand, he speaks about their role in public worship

and their relationship to spiritual leadership in the congregation.

Don't get hung up on things like braided hair.

It meant something different in his day than it does now.

It had certain sexual overtones and implications that it doesn't among us.

The point, however, is this:

Women, apparently, were more concerned with how they dress
than with good works and learning the faith.

Just as prayer is appropriate for the men of the congregation,
in leading the congregation,

so quietness and submissiveness were appropriate for the women in the church.

This was, in fact, standard teaching for all Christians in the early church.

II.

Still, why take up things that may make us cringe or create controversy?

Because they're there in Scripture.

Some may be tempted to dismiss this passage as out-of-step, inauthentic,
or just plain wrong.

We cannot take that path.

We are Christians.

We adhere to Holy Scripture.

If we don't want to listen to God's Word, then what's the point of being together?

And if we don't want to hear it when it rubs us the wrong way,

then what we really want is for God to tell us

only what our itching ears want to hear.

St. Paul's warnings are for us, too—

a warning not to follow after any new teaching,

especially new teachings about men and women,

but to let the Holy Spirits work on us through the Word.

If things were backwards or confused in Paul's day,

you can be sure they're just as backwards and confused today . . . if not more so.

Are men still prone to anger and quarreling instead of prayer?

Are men still prone to conflict?

No doubt we are—just check the local prisons filled with men.

And even if quarreling doesn't seem like an issue here in our congregation,

it easily could be.

There's a warning: none of us are far from it.

And no doubt it has been and is an issue among many Christians.

But I think in our day the larger problem for men is that
they too often fail to lead—to lead spiritually and in prayer.

Men should pray—but do we?

Men, do you pray?

Do you pray yourselves? At home? In Church?

What a shameful thing when men keep silent and refuse to open their mouths,
especially during church services!

The problem may not be, for us, that we're doing it with anger and quarreling
but the problem may be that we're barely doing it at all.

So, men, consider this a "call to arms."

Don't stand on the side.

Don't be lazy.

The most masculine thing you can do—

for yourself, for your family, and for your congregation is to pray.

When you get up in the morning, begin with prayer,
and make a plan to pray throughout the day.

Set an alarm if that helps.

Exercise your leadership not by stirring up conflicts
but by depending on God through prayer.

Women, for your part

you are to pay more attention to how you live than to how you dress.

Don't obsess about how others perceive you or think about you.

Don't be vain.

It's better to have plain dress with a devout and godly life,
then to have all the latest fashions but without godliness.

What you put on is of far less importance than how you live your life.

And even if immodesty doesn't seem like an issue here in our congregation,
it easily could be.

We know that because it is in the culture,

and no doubt it has been and is an issue among some Christians.

Women, when you get up in the morning and when you ask yourself,
"What am I going to put on?"

Instead of starting with your closet or your dresser,
start with your baptism.

Make the sign of the cross over yourself and say,

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Dress yourself first in Christ.

Dress yourself with His forgiveness, righteousness, and holiness.

And if you’re not sure about your motives or about what you’re wearing,

if you’re a young woman and want guidance in these matters,

find a mature sister-in-Christ to talk to.

Don’t be afraid to ask their advice.

And, when it comes to church,

make it your aim to pay attention, learn, and listen quietly.

Now St. Paul isn’t saying that women have no place in the church.

He’s saying precisely the opposite.

You are to learn, even to speak up.

But women are not to be in the authoritative role of teaching.

This is why in our church we don’t have women pastors.

So do learn. Do sing. Do confess the faith.

Do ask questions during Bible class.

Speak up and offer help,

but not in a way that puts down, embarrasses, disrupts order,

or orders around those in spiritual leadership.

It’s a conscious choice.

Make the choice to begin with quietness and submission,

to have the humble attitude of one who receives,

to value your role as a helper.

The role of public teaching, spiritual authority, and governing within Church
is limited in Scripture to men.

This has also been the universal practice of the Christian Church
throughout history up until about the 1960s.

If you lived through the 1960s, well, enough said on that!

When it comes to both men and women and our place in the church,

nothing paralyzes Christians more

and nothing causes more problems in Church

then when men *and* women think primarily of themselves.

That’s the issue that St. Paul is diagnosing—

the underlying issue for both men and women,
 for the men who ended up angry and quarreling
 because they were so convinced that they were right,
 and for the women who cared more about how they looked
 than about putting on the good works that God would have them do.

III.

St. Paul sees how the curse from Genesis 3 has taken hold in the fallen world.
 Even though we can't be entirely free of our sinful nature now,
 even we can't put the curse fully behind us,
 he encourages us, he encourages the church to a healthy life together.

Why? Why this order in the church between men and women?
 It's for our good and for the sake of the Gospel.

When St. Paul first started talking about prayer in First Timothy chapter two,
 he talked about praying for all people, including those in authority.
 But then he ended up talking about Jesus.

He says:

God our Savior desires all people to be saved—

that is the heart and core of what St. Paul is about.

God desires all people to be saved, all races and ages, both men and women.

How can the message of God our Savior be shared

when the men are angry and quarreling

and the women are only thinking of themselves?

He desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (vv 3–4).

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 (vv 5–6).

Even as St. Paul offers direction and instruction and teaching about other matters,
 he still focuses in on the good news,
 the good news of the one who stands between us and God:
 the man Christ Jesus.

He stresses the Lord's humanity—made fully human like us.

He came as our mediator—the one who stands between us and God.

He is our head, our leader,

the one who on the cross lifted holy hands for us—

even praying,

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34).

How true that was of the Roman soldiers who put Christ there.

How true that was of the Jewish leaders who crucified their Messiah.

And how true that often is of us as well,

when we take in the ways of the world,

when we absorb the culture and society around us

to the neglect of God’s Word.

Our Lord paid for our sins.

He accomplished atonement for us on the cross.

He did it for all people, for men and women, for young and old,

so that, though we are different, with respect to salvation:

There is neither Jew nor Greek,

there is neither slave nor free,

there is no male and female,

for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).

We have the same promise.

We have the same inheritance.

We have the same mediator and Savior.

And we have the same God who desires our salvation one and all.

The reason that St. Paul gives for the distinction between men and women

in the Church is this: **For Adam was formed first, then Eve** (v 13).

It has to do with men and men and women as women.

Because man was created first and woman second,

he also notes this:

Adam was not deceived,

but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor (v 14).

He’s not taking Adam off the hook.

Read Romans and you’ll see that he nails Adam:

Sin came into the world through one man (Rom 5:12).

But note the difference:

Eve was deceived.

She was the first to believe the serpent.

The implication is that Adam was not deceived—

his eyes were wide open.

He was flat out disobedient.

These are the characteristic weakness that played a role in the fall
 with both Adam and Eve.
 Man and woman, defective in different ways.
 Yet man and woman redeemed by Christ in the same way.

The last verse of our reading also requires comment.
 It's the most confusing of all:

She [woman] will be saved through childbearing
—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control (v 15).

This does not mean that women are saved by having children.
 It does not mean that the whole destiny of women is childbearing.
 A better translation is this:

She will be saved by the birth of *the* Child.

The Greek has the article—*the* Child.

The Child saves women and men.

It means that even though woman became a transgressor by being deceived
 and man by being disobedient,
 yet both woman and man will be saved by the birth of the Christ,
 the seed of the woman.

As God said to the serpent:

He will crush your head, and you will bruise His heel (Gen 3:15).

So there is a central role for woman in salvation.

You see this with St. Mary, the mother of God.

As Eve heard the serpent's word and was deceived,

so Mary, mirroring that, hears God's word about her Son and believes:

You will have a Son, and He will be called the Son of God (Lk 1:31–32).

Mary said, "**Let it be to me according to your word**" (Lk 1:38).

Contrast that with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist,
 who, when he heard, did not believe.

So also with the resurrection.

Women were the first to visit the tomb.

They were the first to believe when the angel said,
 "He is risen from the dead."

The women first, then afterwards the apostles and men.

When their eyes are also opened,
 the church grows.

They are joined together in the faith—men and women—
centered on the one mediator, Jesus Christ,
who reconciles us with the Father.

The roles He has for us in the Church,
the roles He gives to us as men and women, as head and helper, are still valid.
They are still to be valued by us as God's people.
We aren't in competition but in Christ we are in harmony,
and we are working together,
so that not only we know our Lord and Savior
but that others may know Him as well,
because He desires all people to be saved.

So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
with your sins forgiven,
and taught by our Lord,
take up the role and calling He has given you.
Men, lift your holy hands in prayer
for yourselves and your family and your church.
Women, adorn yourselves with good works, of which you have men,
and learn quietly and in submission,
that God's word may serve all of us
as we go through this life under Christ our head
into the life of the world to come.

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ
Jesus.

Phil 4:7