

Church Ladies: The Most Powerful Women in the World, p.2

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Well, let's go to 1 Timothy 2 as we continue going through this New Testament epistle. This is a letter that was written from the Apostle Paul to a younger pastor, Timothy. He has left Timothy in the esteemed and cultured city of Ephesus to oversee the church there, function as the pastor there, and he's giving Timothy some specific instruction about things to do in the church that the church might be more of what God wants it to be, in effect that it might be beautified. You see, the church is of God's wisdom, the church is of God's power, the church is to make a true and accurate statement of God to the world, therefore we are always reforming the church to biblical fidelity so that it will more accurately display God's wisdom and display God's power to the world, and that's what Paul's doing, he's helping the folks 2,000 years ago in the church at Ephesus but also helping all of us today to know how to take the bride of Christ, the church, and beautify her so that she is the accurate reflection of her groom, Jesus Christ.

Now we come to in, in, in the letter, now we've got it divided up today, of course, in chapters and verses, it wasn't originally written that way, but it does help us keep up with where we are in our expositional preaching through the book, so we go to chapter 2 of 1 Timothy and we begin in verse 9 and go through verse 15 and this will be Part 2 of this expositional section and I've entitled it "Church Ladies: The Most Powerful Women in the World." Church ladies: the most powerful women in the world. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and in verse 9 he says,

9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, 10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. 11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 But women will be preserved [or saved] through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity and self-restraint.

Now I know there's been a lot of, um, ah, comedic use of the, the title "Church Ladies," ah, things on television and other places because there are, there, there are some funny church ladies out there but that's not what I'm talking. I'm talking about ladies who've been born of the Spirit, ladies who have been changed by the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit so that their hearts are changed. They have redeemed hearts and so they have the capacity to both appreciate and embrace God's wisdom over man's wisdom. So here we're gonna see in this text God's wisdom for ladies and primarily for ladies' sphere and responsibilities in the local church.

So if you're not born again, if God hasn't changed you and given you a, an appreciation and even a treasuring of God's wisdom for your role, then this is going to be odd to you, it's going to be foreign to you, it's going to be difficult for you. I mean, even for the truly converted godly woman it's a stretch and it's a challenge and that's why we talk about the fact that when you become a Christian you didn't just repent, you became a repentor. You continually find biblical truths and continually talk truth to yourself and continually try to get yourself and your thinking, your heart and mind and in your behavior lined up with the word of God.

Now we begin by talking about the fact that in our present culture and far, and far too much in the organized church itself, there is an all-out unrelenting attack on biblical womanhood and biblical motherhood. We laid out several things that prove this but I don't need to prove this. It's, it's overwhelming how forceful, thorough and unrelenting the railing and reviling against women or the concept that women ought to honor the God-ordained roles of women in culture, in the home, or even in the church.

Now as we looked at this, I brought out two women for you to consider. I brought out Eve – listen to how I'm gonna package this now – I wanted you to see Eve in her heart condition in the garden of Eden when she sinned, the actions she performed out of that heart condition, and then the consequences of those actions. Satan comes into the garden, Satan's clever and crafty. He knows not to go to Adam, he knows Eve is an easier prey. So he, in effect, challenges Eve in the garden about the commandment God gave Adam and Eve about not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he says, "Now Eve, did God really say that?" Now I'm, I'm amplifying and paraphrasing the story, alright? "Did God really say that? Does God really not want you to do that, Eve? As a matter of fact, really the reason God doesn't want you to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because, Eve, the day you eat of it, you'll be like God. Eve, God's holding you back." That's, in effect, what Satan is saying. "Eve, God is robbing you of your fulfillment. God is being oppressive towards you, Eve. Eve, why don't you stand on your own two feet? No need to run to Adam who is your head or, ordained by God, and get his counsel or his guidance in this. You make your own decision. Eve, be 'I am woman, hear me roar.'" And Eve assumes headship. Eve does not go to her husband. Eve should have said to Satan, "Time out. This isn't about which grocery store I buy the groceries at, this is a very important issue. I need to go to the one God's placed as my spiritual authority." She didn't, she was independent, she acted as head, she succumbs to the crafty and clever manipulations of Satan, she takes of the tree and then she eats, then she gives to Adam and he eats.

Now listen to me: I'm only dealing with Eve and not Adam because that's what our New Testament text is dealing with. I'm in no way saying that Eve's responsibility is more than Adam's. Adam sinned. Adam willfully sinned. Adam might of, could, should have kept a little closer watch on his wife. Adam shouldn't have followed her headship and leadership on this, he should've said, "Now wait a minute, what did God say, Eve?" So Adam's very guilty and very responsible and the text bears that out in many places, but the text today is dealing with Eve.

So you have Eve in her heart condition not submissive, taking headship, taking control, calling her own shots. You have her actions, she actually acted that way and ate of the tree. And then we have the consequence and don't forget this, she bears a son, his name is Cain, she bears another son, his name is Abel, and in a, in a, in a jealous rage, Cain killed and murdered Abel and thus the sin and ruin and destruction begins in the world and has continued to this day. Eve's heart, Eve's actions brought terrible sin consequences and ruin into the earth.

Then I said there's another woman I want you to consider, Mary, the virgin Mary who by all biblical accounts didn't act like Eve; when God gave her a special commission, she was sweet, she was humble, she was yielded, and she did what God said and she birthed a son and unlike Cain, she birthed the Son of God. Now Eve was not special, I mean, Mary was not special. Mary was not unique and superior to other women, it's just for that point in time by the grace of God because she was a born again child of God, she was honorable to God in a submissive way and God used her mightily and through her offspring the, the, the calls of sin and ruin in the world is reversed. Jesus came to stop sin. Jesus came to reverse the cause of destruction and evil in the world. And I said every woman lines up under Eve, her heart actions and consequences, or Mary, her heart, her actions and her good consequence through her child.

Now we come to our text and we've already looked at I. where Paul's writing to these ladies and he says here in I., I want to talk to you about your heart, your hairdos and your hemlines. I. Your heart, your hairdo and your hemlines. This is we're going over material we've already begun but he tells, I want, and he says, "And I want the women in the church," in verse 9, "to adorn themselves," that is, to dress themselves, "properly." Ah, adornment here has the idea of unfurling a banner. Ladies, when you dress, he says, you're, you're making an announcement about who you are. What he's saying here, "And you're a daughter of the King. You're a child of the one true God of holiness and dignity and order and what is proper." He says, "Now address yourself that way. Don't dress like the women of the world, dress like a daughter of the King."

He goes on and builds on this, not only the word "adorn" but he uses the word "proper" here. It comes from the word "cosmos." It means "order or propriety; what is seemly; what is becoming; what is seemly; what is right; what is orderly," since you are made in the image of God and ought to reflect the one true and holy and righteous God. He says, "Dress that way."

Then he uses another word, "modestly." He says, "Now dress modestly," and it doesn't really have the same idea, well, partly has the same idea we use the word "modest" today, but it has more of the idea of the heart disposition. It literally means to have an honorable shame in your heart. Godly ladies should walk this earth with an honorable shame, that is, they would be ashamed to clothe themselves in such a way that misrepresents the God they know, love and serve. It's a, it's, it's, it's a, it's a holding of a shame-fastness, an honorable shame in their heart that they would not want to do that.

Then he uses the word "discreetly" here. He just keeps building amplifier upon amplifier to, to let the ladies of the church understand what he means. But the word "discreetly" in verse 9 means "of sound mind." Literally you could say, "Ladies, don't dress like you've lost your mind. Don't dress like you've forgotten in your thinking who God is and what he's like." That's why it's very important and we send a lot of energy here at Grace Life teaching ourselves about the attributes of God. We need to know what he's like so that we reflect him appropriately. Too many church ladies or church going ladies dress like they've lost their minds. He says, "Ladies, don't dress that way."

In verse 9, the last part, now he contrasts this with the women of the age. He said, "You know, the, the women in Ephesus, this cultured city, they are so extravagant, they are so excessive, their value and their worth in life is based on their outward appearance. They'll take their hair, they'll roll their hair up in the most extravagant ways, they'll put pearls and jewels and gold, ah, clasp in their hair because that's all they've got." He's not saying all adornments are wrong, but he is saying, "You're different. You have a beauty they don't have, so be careful that you're not associated the way they adorn themselves because they adorn themselves merely externally and you're to be adorning yourselves internally that reflects out externally." And I emphasize to you ladies that, um, the great aspect is the heart. The heart. The heart. Yes, there's certain lengths of skirts and dresses that ought not to be worn, there's certain types of things that ought to fit, not fit certain ways depending on the situation, but, um, it's the heart attitude that, "I love my God. I want to honor Him and be appropriate and proper in my representation of Him in my dress."

I ended by challenging our older ladies, always with grace, with kindness and with humility, but be more intentional to talk to our younger ladies about proper dress for a real woman of God.

Now II. Let's go to new material. II is good works and godly women. Good works and godly women, and we go to verse 10 and he continues talking to the ladies and he says, "but rather by means of good works which is proper," there's that proper word again, "for women making a claim to godliness." In verse 9 he says, "Ladies, don't dress in a way that's improper for a woman of God," in verse 10 he says, "Now I'm gonna tell you about the way it is proper for a woman of God to adorn herself. You see, you need to adorn your life, ladies, with good works." With good works. A godly woman, her beauty and attractiveness is seen by the pattern of her conduct not so much by the pattern of what she wears on the outside.

Now let's remind ourselves that the context is the local church and, ladies, certainly your life should be filled with honorable good works that please the Lord but whatever else you're involved in, your good works should be centered in serving the Lord in his local church, for you Grace Life Church of the Shoals. You see, the lady that is a 50% attender on Sunday morning only, so I'm talking to some of you, but yet she's known in the community that she dresses to the nines, that is not what a Christian lady should be acting like and that's what Paul's pointing out.

There's a key truth here and that key truth is the good works God's ordained for you to do should fill your life but it must not, it must absolutely include and be centered in God's local church. I would like to challenge and charge our ladies this morning, I want you to be cautious ladies, cautious of independent women ministers and independent women ministries. I was trying to think and you might can bring me one to mind that I hadn't thought about but I've tried to think about the women ministers and ministries I've known through the years that are divorced from their husband's oversight and the oversight of a healthy local church and particularly the elders of a healthy local church, and I find that these ladies when they get popular and money comes in and their ministries grow, if they don't stay accountable like Jeff Noblit is accountable to my elders, I don't do anything in Anchored in Truth or anything else without my elders' blessing, that's the way God ordained us to function. How much more should ladies if they feel God has a spiritual ministry for them function under the blessing of their local church and the local church elders? Anyway, what I'm saying is when, when ladies get independent of this, they're going down a wrong track and almost inevitably given enough time they end up espousing unsound doctrine and unsound practice in their ministries.

Now all the women of the church at Ephesus under Timothy's oversight were women who professed godliness and good works, therefore, is the proper outworking of the true inner profession of these ladies. Let me ask you something, ladies: do you want the first thing people think of you to be, "Boy, she always dresses wonderfully. She always dresses beautifully." That's not wrong, I'm just saying do you want that to be the primary thing people think about you? Or do you want the primary thing they think about you to be, "She is a humble and faithful servant of Jesus Christ"? I think the point Paul's making here is, "If you ladies in the church act like the Ephesian ladies of this culture Paul's writing to, if you put that much work and effort and time and money in, in, in extravagant outward appearance, you don't have time to do the good works God's called you to do as a woman of God." Not that the outward beauty and adornments are all wrong but there just isn't time for both, that and the good works you're to be doing for God and the church.

Now I want to spend some time in Proverbs because the woman described in Proverbs 31 is a sterling example of the good works that are to be a godly woman's chief adornment. Proverbs 31 woman is a sterling example of the good works that are to be a godly woman's chief adornment. Before we get to 31 though, and these will be on your screen to help us out, I want us to look at Proverbs 11:22. What a verse this is. Proverbs 11:22, the writer says, "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion." Wow, what a vivid picture that is. I, I, I have, ah, been shopping or places

two or three times lately and I'm noticing women are wearing rings in their nose. Have you seen that? And I'm not saying that's necessarily evil or even wrong, it's just in my background I grew up working on farms. I did. That's, I, I, I paid my bills and paid my car payment as a high school guy working for a guy who had 300 head of cattle and, and, and the only thing I remember with nose rings were hogs or heifers. That's just the truth. That's my orientation and, um, ah, now in this culture that wouldn't have been the case and I assume some godly ladies had some nose rings, matter of fact, I think we can prove that biblically they did, but in my orientation, it, it, you know, I think about a pig or a, or a heifer and the reason you put a ring in a pig or a heifer's nose is so you can pull them around, so you can control them. Far too many of our ladies are being pulled around and controlled by the wrong entities.

Anyway, he says, the writer of Proverbs says in Proverbs 11:22, "Like a ring of gold in a swine's snout." Pop it back up there for me, brother, "Like a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion." So he says, "This is a beautiful woman and she makes herself up so beautifully but she doesn't have sound judgment concerning her morals, concerning her activities, concerning what she does with her life. And so it's like taking a gold ring and putting it on an old, dirty, nasty hog and him rubbing around in the muck and the mire and the dung of the ground." My point is women of God need to have the kind of heart and good works that speaks loudest and their clothing complements that and doesn't crowd it out. It, it, is not, as you, again, I'll bring up the women of country music, I'll bring up the women of popular music or rock music, whatever it is, I'll bring up the women of Hollywood, you know what you see? You see a gold ring in swine snouts. They're beautiful. They're beautiful women. No discretion. No doubt sound judgment. No wisdom. No dignity. Just filthiness. A ring of gold in a swine's snout.

Now let's go to Proverbs 31 and let's look at this lady who is the sterling example of how good works are a godly woman's chief adornment. First of all he says here and he's writing to a young man, he's wanting a young man to grasp some things and he says, "An excellent wife, who can find?" Now let me stop right there. It's easier to find a wife, it's hard to find an excellent wife. An excellent wife, who can find?

Then he says, "For her worth is far above jewels." Now isn't that interesting? Here we have jewelry mentioned again and that's the same thing Paul was talking about to the church at Ephesus here to Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus. He said, "You know, these Ephesian ladies are all about the jewelry." Not wrong but the problem is that's all they're about. They don't have any substance. And here the Proverbs 31 woman, she may very well have worn jewelry, that's not the issue, it's just that she has substance far beyond the veneer of adornments. There's something to her. She's not just cosmetics and worldly adornment.

Now Proverbs 31:17, "She girds," this text says. That's a, a, a kind of a clothing, a garment, but, "She girds herself with strength And her arms are strong." Ladies, let me say something to you: the Bible speaks of women being soft. God made Eve soft. He talks about women being submissive but I'm gonna tell you what, the Bible also talks

about those very same soft submissive women being strong. There is a strength to a godly woman that confounds the world. It's a powerful strength. It's a wonderful strength. It's a mighty strength. This Proverbs 31 woman, she's known, she's has all the attributes you would look for in a godly mom and a godly wife, but they notice her strength. Godly strength.

Proverbs 31:25 builds on this, "Strength and dignity are her clothing." Notice again that's her adornment, that's her clothing, it's strength and dignity, "And she smiles at the future."

Now Proverbs 31:21, "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet." Now the point is here she's, she's centered in her household. Now she has other enterprises. I've told you before to be a godly woman is not as simple as saying, "I don't work outside the home." I wish more of you only worked within your homes but I don't know God's will there. It, it gets difficult when you understand the biblical structure for a home and for marriage life sometimes when both work, but I've known godly ladies who did things outside their home, this lady did some things outside her home and they seemed to manage it okay, but I am tired of seeing our ladies rundown and beat-down because they've got one authority in the world and one authority at home. So what I'm saying here is, men, if you, if you're letting your wives do this, you need to have a lot of deference, a lot of understanding and a lot of encouragement and support for her.

Centered in her home. Then Proverbs 31:25, "Strength and dignity are her clothing." Oh, I'm sorry. I'm down to Proverbs 31:22, "She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple." Now here we go with actually literal garments. Earlier her clothing was her dignity and her strength, her overall godliness and good works. Now it says but she did dress, by the way, notice, very nicely. In this day, linen and purple were very expensive fabrics, so she knew how to put on the date dress when her husband took her out to eat. She knew how to look beautiful but it never outshined her inner beauty and I think that's the point. Everything is orderly. Everything is appropriate. Going back to Paul's words in Ephesus, everything is modest. She lives with that beautiful balance of nice clothing and adornments but never does this outer garment outshine her inner beauty.

And then verse 20, um, chapter, um, 31, verse 11 rather, "The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain." Part of her good works as a godly woman is that she honors the headship of her husband and therefore is an invaluable asset and blessing to his calling in life. There's a sense in which she conforms to the calling of her husband and she makes sure she undergirds him in that. In other words, she's never a competitor to him, she is a complement for him. She's never trying to upstage him and that's why it says the husband there in, ah, where are we? Verse 11, "her husband trust in her, And he will have no lack of gain."

And then in verse 23, Proverbs 31:23, "And her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land." That, the point is the result of this woman's good

works in her home and toward her husband is the key element in his success in the community. It's a powerful truth there. There is a weakness in men whereby God knew we needed a helpmeet. That doesn't diminish our head, headship but we so need these ladies in our lives.

I, I, I've said this before but it just penetrated me when I heard this testimony. Ah, most of you, many of you will know the name Meghan Kelly. She was a, a news lady on Fox News and she went to another network and now she's out, I think, for a while not doing anything. But, ah, she was married to a physician and they divorced and now she's in her second marriage and her, her, her first husband was interviewed and he didn't sound like he had bitterness or, or, or ought against her necessarily and they said, "Why did you and Meghan Kelly get divorced?" He said, "Because we both needed a wife. We both needed a wife. She needed somebody to come alongside her and be her helpmeet and support her in her career, I needed somebody to come alongside me and help me in my career, and there just wasn't enough of us to go around." Interesting statement.

Now here's, here's a powerful thing that shows you how true church ladies are the most powerful women in the world, that is that this Proverbs 31 lady is a lady that had an enduring legacy because of her good works. Not because of her extravagant or showy or fancy clothing, though she clothed herself very well, but that wasn't the main thing. Now we see this in Proverbs 31:28-31. Notice what happens to this lady. "Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all.'" It's as if her husband and her children and this includes her children's children and her children's children's children, they all cannot honor this woman enough for her wisdom and her commitment to biblically defined good works.

And they go on and say in verse 30 of Proverbs 31, "Charm is deceitful," nothing wrong with charm but it ain't the main thing, "Charm is deceitful, beauty is vain," nothing wrong with beauty but you don't base your life as a godly woman on outward beauty, but on this, the last part of verse 30, "But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised." Now did you see that promise, ladies? She shall be praised. So Satan throws out the lie to you, "You want to be well thought of? You want to be esteemed? You want to be praised in today's world? Then do all these things." Not all of them are necessarily wrong or evil but are you committing to make sure you do what God says is wise and right? She shall be praised.

Notice verse 31 of Proverbs 31, "Give her the product of her hands, And let her works," not her looks, that's not unimportant but it's not the primary thing, "let her works praise her in the gates." So now we have all of her family lineage and her husband and the gates means the community, she has now gained esteemed and an enduring legacy in the community. God saw to it.

This is the kind of good works Paul is talking about for the ladies in the church at Ephesus. Now, ladies, Galatians 6:9 I think is a great verse for you to hang onto. Galatians 6:9 tells us, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." Because I know what's happening, you say, "Pastor, you don't

even understand. If I go out in the world and even mention some of these biblical truths about God's role for women, I'm scoffed at, I'm derided, I'm ridiculed. Nobody really loves, agrees with this. Nobody supports this. It doesn't get you anywhere." In due time. In due time you will reap if you do not grow weary. Keep on keeping on. God's way is right. God's way is wise. And God's way is best. Ladies, listen to your pastor this morning, I care deeply that you end your lives well with sweetness, with thankfulness, with blessedness, with the honor you deserve to receive for being a woman committed to biblical good works.

So Paul says, "Now ladies, instead of adorning yourself like the world wants you to adorn yourself, I'm challenging you and charging you to adorn yourself that what is proper and fitting for a godly one, that is, to adorn your life with good works." Now this is gonna be three parts but I want to say two things in closing. 1. Me preaching this, this morning, has absolutely nothing to do with it being Father's Day but God knows what he's doing, amen? I started exegeting the text and this is where we've gotten to. Now I charge you ladies and I know we have had a strong emphasis in the last year and a half or so to reaffirm and recommit ourselves to biblical womanhood and biblical motherhood in the church, and I, I applaud our ladies for that kind of a heart, but what has God said to you this morning? Are you out of balance? If you're like your pastor, you get out of balance sometimes, you get a little bit over this way in your thinking and you need to move back over to where the Bible is. There are ladies out there in the world and I don't mean to be ugly and I don't mean to be demeaning, but they think godliness means they have to dress themselves like they're pitiful. That's not what the Bible is saying. This Proverbs 31 woman had linen and scarlet, that wasn't pitiful. And so there are some women that get over here and said, "I have to, I have to dress like I'm counter-cultural almost." That's not what it's saying.

So you might be out of balance on that end, and there's women over here and, quite honestly, in your heart and that's where it starts, you've had way too much emphasis on the outer, while that's not wrong, but you have not had enough emphasis on the inner beauty of good works. And so we're always repenting and getting lined back up where we need to be and that's what God calls us to do.

I pastor some of the finest Christian ladies in the world and I know that because I know the way you receive the truth of the word of God. So let's keep pressing on. Look, even when the enemy is coming on like a flood against us, let's keep raising up the standard against him, and you know, ladies, what the key is? As you get to your senior years and the women in these worldly churches, the worldly churches that have succumbed to Lynyrd Skynyrd pantomimes to keep people coming to church, what ridiculous blasphemous nonsense. You come to this church to hear Southern rock music, you need to go somewhere else. By the way, I like some Southern rock music but not in God's house and not anywhere close to the glory and dignity and honor of our God and his truth. The ladies in these worldly churches are gonna scoff at you. Go check them out when they're 67, 76 and 83, and see if their children and their children's children and their children's children's children and their husbands and even the community says, "That was a great woman. That was a great woman."

God's trying to help us. In due time. In due time you'll reap if you don't grow weary. Now I, I, I want a, I want a, I want to in balance, I like that word "balance," did you know that? Because the Bible's full of balance. Some of you in here are gonna go too far in correction. Don't do that. Be prayerful. Be methodical in your steps if you need to repent of some things. I'm not saying they're not some of you that might need to draw some lines and say, "I'm not, I'm not going there anymore. I'm not doing that anymore." There may be some of that but let's always call ourselves back to the wisdom of God.

Ladies, listen, God loves you, cares for you, and wants to bless you more than you can possibly comprehend. He just wants you to trust his wisdom. Trust his wisdom and as time goes on, you will be the powerful women who impact the world for good and God's glory. You'll be like Mary, not like Eve, and make a positive and saving influence on the world instead of a ruining and destructive influence on the world.