

Subject: *The Role of Women in the Church*

Scripture: *1 Timothy 2:8-15*

I don't have to tell you that this is a controversial and touchy subject in our day. I want to say three things by way of introduction to this text and this subject.

- The woman's role is sadly misunderstood

There is a lot of confusion and debate. Feminists want to eliminate the God-given roles of men and women. Many are trying to redefine what it means to be a man or a woman

- The woman's role is vitally important

Where would our churches and our families be without the love and influence of godly wives and mothers? Because the woman's role is so important it is always under the attack of Satan and the world.

- The woman's role is clearly defined

The Bible gives us clear guidance and direction. When Paul addressed the subject of women in the church it was part of his overall purpose to set things in order (see 3:14-15). When we come to a passage like this we need to understand that this still has application for us today. This is not limited to the first century or Bible times. This is timeless truth that never goes out of date.

THE WOMAN'S CLOTHING (vs. 9)

A Christian woman must be concerned with how she looks and how she dresses. The word "adorn" (Greek, *kosmeo*) means to arrange or put in order. A woman must dress neatly and also modestly. She is to have an attitude of humility ("shamefacedness" means that she would be ashamed and feel guilty if she distracted someone from worshipping God). She also uses discretion ("sobriety"). She is careful to dress in a way that fits who she is. She does not try to impress with fancy hairdos or jewelry or fancy clothes in a way that draws attention to herself. If anybody knew women, it was King Solomon. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (a little boy said porcupines). *Proverbs 11:22 As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.* What about make up? One man said, "If the barn door needs painting, paint it."

THE WOMAN'S CONDUCT (vs. 10)

A Christian woman is not only known by her appearance, but by her actions. Her practice should match her profession of godliness (reverence). See 1 Peter 3:1-6.

THE WOMAN'S CALLING (vs. 11-12)

Notice two words: silence and subjection. Paul defines the woman's role in public worship as a learner rather than a teacher. He defines her role as one of submission and not leadership. To learn in silence doesn't mean she can't speak, but it means she does not speak as the pastor or teacher in public worship. She is not to take the man's role as pastor or teacher. The phrase "to teach" (vs. 12) does not refer to the act of teaching but to the official role of

teaching the church. Paul will go to say in 3:2, that a pastor must be the husband of one wife. In other words, he is to be a man and not a woman. God does not call women to be pastors and deacons.

This has nothing to do with spiritual status. In Christ men and women are equal, but their roles are different. Even in the Old Testament women had spiritual status equal to men. His Word was given to all Israel, men and women alike. Both mothers and fathers were to teach it to their children. Women participated with men in the religious feasts. But there were differences. They were spiritually equal, but they had different roles. Israel had many kings, but no queens (Athaliah usurped the throne). No women served as priests. None of the writers of the Old Testament were women. No woman had an on-going, permanent ministry as a prophet like Elijah or Elisha. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Isaiah's wife are all called prophetesses, but none of them had a permanent calling to that office. Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah gave only one recorded prophecy and Isaiah's wife gave none. She is called a prophetess because she gave birth to a child whose name had a prophetic meaning. A fifth woman mentioned as a prophetess, Noadiah, was a false prophetess.

The New Testament teaches that men and women are equal in Christ, but they have distinct and different roles. ***Galatians 3:28*** *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* This is a statement about spiritual standing, not roles in the church. There are no women pastors, evangelists, or deacons in the New Testament. Apparently some women in the church wanted to be a teacher of the congregation and be in leadership because Paul writes (vs. 12) "I do not allow (suffer) a woman to teach." This word means to allow someone to do what they desire to do. When the church gathers for worship women are to listen to the men who teach and preach. They are to be in all subjection (a military term which means to line up under).

Subjection or submission is not something bad or negative, but something good and positive. Submission is something all believers, both men and women, must have. ***Philippians 2:10*** *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* When Paul addresses the responsibilities of husbands and wives in marriage, he introduces it by writing, ***Ephesians 5:21*** *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

These verses do not prevent women from teaching other women or children (Tit. 2:3-5). The issue is simply women not being in authority over men. This does not mean that women are inferior to men. Think about the relationship of Christ to the Father. There is perfect equality in the Trinity, but Christ is always submissive to the Father. ***1 Corinthians 11:3*** *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*

THE WOMAN'S CREATION & CORRUPTION (vs. 13-14)

The word "for" indicates two reasons for the woman's role. The first has to do with the order of creation. Adam was created first, then Eve. The second reason has to do with the temptation and sin in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-6). Adam was not deceived, but Eve was deceived by Satan. Paul refers to this again in ***2 Corinthians 11:3*** *But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

Does this mean that Eve was to blame and not Adam? No. Elsewhere in the Bible original sin is traced back to Adam. **Romans 5:12** *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* **1 Corinthians 15:21-22** ²¹ *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.* ²² *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

The point being made here is that Eve was vulnerable and she was deceived. Adam deliberately chose to disobey God. For Eve it was a sin of weakness. For Adam it was a sin of wickedness.

THE WOMAN'S CONTRIBUTION (vs. 15)

Paul shifts from Eve to the role of women in general because of the future tense (she shall be saved) and the plural pronoun (if they continue). The key word in verse 15 is saved. This is not a reference to spiritual salvation or eternal salvation, but to being delivered from the stigma attached to her role in the fall. The point is that while a woman had a part in leading the world into sin, ever since women have the privilege of leading the world to God through her godly influence as a wife and mother. Her greatest contribution is bearing children and raising them in an atmosphere of faith, love, holiness, and sobriety (clear thinking and self-control). It is obvious that Paul is writing in general terms because God's will for some women is a life of being single or a life without children. All these things are in God's control. But we rejoice in God's perfect plan for all women. Where would we be without godly women in our church and in our lives?