

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

### INTRODUCTION

Now we come to the second half of my sermon on the role of woman within the church. Let me just take a moment to recap what I said in order to progress this week. We looked at some key words last week and we discovered that the word 'silence' (v 11) does not mean complete silence but it is used in v 12 as the opposite of women exercising authority over men.

In other words a woman is not to teach or exercise authority over a man but is to be silent. We saw that what is meant is that women are to have the sort of silence or quietness of spirit that respects and honours the men whom God has called to exercise authority and to teach within the church. So the point is not whether a woman says nothing but whether she is submissive and whether she supports the authority of male leadership. To be silent or quiet means not speaking in a way that compromises that authority. The point I made was that a woman is to be submissive and not exercise authority over men by teaching.

But let's move on and discover:

### 1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEACH (v 12)?

A woman is not permitted to teach, but how extensive is this prohibition. Is it never right for a woman to teach in any situation? Well if we look at Titus 2:3 we see that the older women are to teach the younger woman how to love their husbands and children. In 2 Timothy 3:14 Paul tells Timothy to remember from whom he learned the scriptures. The persons he has in mind (we can tell from 2 Timothy 1:5) are Eunice and Lois, Timothy's Mother and Grandmother (his father was not a believer or even a Jew - Acts 16:3). One other example is Priscilla. It says in Acts 18:26 that Priscilla along with her husband Aquila took Apollos home and "explained to him the way of God more accurately."

So as we can see there where some situations that women did teach, they taught young woman, children and, along with their husbands, individuals. So in the light of those references it is unlikely that Paul is saying in our passage that every kind of teaching is forbidden to women. So what does Paul mean by "I do not permit a woman to teach?" The safest thing to do is to let the next phrase "or to exercise authority over a man." guide us here. It seems to me that what Paul has in mind here is not all teaching per se, but a particular kind of teaching, teaching that involves exercising authority over men. For in our text 'to teach and exercise authority' goes together, they belong to the same glove.

Before we seek to apply this we need to move on and discover:

### 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY?

The key that unlocks the door for me is found in the role of elders as we find it in the New Testament. For as we look at the role of elders we find that they had two basic responsibilities, they were to govern or rule the church and they were to teach. The best passage that brings this dual role out is in 1 Timothy 5:17. Elders are to rule or govern and elders are to teach. In Acts 20:28 the elders at Ephesus were called by the Holy Spirit and made overseers and shepherds of the flock. Those roles involved exercising authority in governing or ruling the church and in teaching the flock.

Therefore I want to suggest to you that what Paul means in v 12 is that he does not permit a woman to fill the office of elder within the church. He does not permit a woman to govern the church or to teach the flock, he does not permit a woman to assume the office of elder in the

church. So the authority that Paul has in mind in verse 12 seems to me to make sense if we see it as the authority of the eldership.

So how can we apply this today? Women are able to exercise a teaching ministry as long as they are not exercising authority over men. This automatically rules them out of public ministry when the whole church is gathered together. Their role as we saw last week is one of supporting the eldership, by learning from their teaching and by having an attitude of submission and contentment in the role that God has given to them. However as we saw from the three examples I gave you, there is a teaching role for women.

The instruction of children in the things of God is a very important role. That might be teaching our own children or our grandchildren, or it might be in a more formal setting of Sunday school or children's club. Don't forget the massive role that Timothy's Mum and Grandmother played in Timothy's life, they taught him the scriptures and he was greatly influenced by their godly teaching.

We are growing up in a society where children know literally nothing about the bible. Who is going to teach them and instruct them in the things of God? In the average church the elders have plenty of other things to do, in teaching and exercising pastoral care of the flock so there is a role here for others to fill. Please do not see teaching children as a sort of second best, I get annoyed when people treat children's work especially teaching them in a very shabby way. I believe you should spend as much time consulting the commentaries for a children's lesson, as an elder would do preparing for his sermons.

Another role that is open to women as far as teaching ministry is concerning is the teaching of fellow women, especially the older ladies (in the faith) teaching the younger ones. There is a whole number of areas here to cover. What about raising children, what does the bible say about that and what about a young mother who has an unsaved husband how should she respond? What about Mums who have to work, how can they balance all their commitments? Older and more experienced Christian women can easily teach the younger ones on these and many more subjects. This teaching doesn't have to be in a formal setting; it can and should be going on in an informal way in every church.

Then there is the area of teaching individuals in our homes, teaching those who are immature, or those who are confused. Couples particularly have an important role to play here offering hospitality and teaching to those who need it. This is a way to compliment the ministry of the eldership; you can invite someone round for coffee and talk to them about the sermon. You see none of these things are in opposition to one another, all are working together to build up the flock of God and to evangelise the lost.

There are plenty of opportunities for gifted women to teach, but as we have seen they are not allowed to teach in formal public settings where they would be acting like an elder. The Sunday public ministry of the word is not open to women, for this is the task of the elders, this is one of the ways that the eldership humbly exercise their God given authority in the church.

But why are women not allowed to teach or exercise authority over men? Are women less capable as teachers, are they less caring than men in pasturing or are they unwise in their decision making? Well the answer to all of those things is no. The reason why God has ordained our roles in such a way is to do with how He has ordered the roles of men and woman at creation.

### 3. WHY THE CHURCH SHOULD HAVE MALE ELDERS ONLYS (vs. 13-14)

Paul gives two reasons why men and not women should bear the responsibility of eldership within the church. Note this has nothing to do with the culture of the day, nor has it anything to be with

Paul being bias against women as the Christian feminist tells us. No! The reasons given go back to creation and God's ordering of the roles of men and women.

**a) Man Was Created First, Then Woman (v 13)** – God created Adam first and put him in the Garden of Eden and gave him the responsibility for the moral and spiritual life in the garden. He then created Eve as Adam's partner and assistant to help him carry out his responsibilities. In other words when Paul teaches that men should bear the primary responsibility for directing the affairs of the church and for teaching; he is basing it on something woven into the fabric of manhood and womanhood by virtue of our creation.

This is how God wanted it to be, for the good of men and women. This was always God's intention from the beginning and it was not as a result of sin that God ordained it this way. Therefore the man has the responsibility of leadership, this is true in the marriage relationship and this is true in the church and the reason for this is because God created Adam first and gave him the leadership responsibilities and then He created Eve to help and support him.

**b) Adam was not deceived but Eve was and became a sinner** – What does Paul mean by this. Well first of all we need to go back to Genesis 3:1 and notice that Satan in the form of a serpent spoke to the woman and not the man. This I believe, as we will see in a minute has significance. The second thing to notice from Genesis 3 is that Adam is evidently with Eve while Satan is talking to her.

For when we come to verse 6 and the woman eats of the forbidden fruit, we read that she gave some to her husband. There is no indication that she had to go and get him or that he has just arrived on the scene, but it implies that Adam was with Eve, during her conversation with the serpent. The third thing I want you to notice is that God disapproves not only of the eating of the fruit but the way that Adam and Eve related to each other. In Genesis 3:17 God reprimands Adam for listening to the voice of his wife. There is no record in Genesis 3 of Eve speaking to Adam directly, but there is good reason to believe that Adam was present listening to Eve's conversation with the serpent and agreeing with her.

God's reprimand is not just because Adam took the forbidden fruit but also because he forsook his responsibility to be a leader and spiritual guardian of his home. Satan knew the created order, that God had ordained for the good of mankind and he deliberately defied it by ignoring Adam and taking up his dealings with Eve. Satan put her in the position of spokeswoman and leader; he had succeeded in reversing the roles that God had ordained for Adam and Eve.

I think this is what Paul is referring to in 1 Timothy 2:14. Let me try and paraphrase this verse for you. Adam was not deceived (that is Adam was not approached by the deceiver and did not carry out direct dealings with the deceiver), but the woman was deceived and became a sinner (that is she was the one who took up the dealings with the deceiver and was led through her direct interaction with him into deception and sin). If this is the right understanding of Genesis 3 then what Paul is saying is not that women are more deceivable than men but that when God's order of leadership is turned on its head it brings damage and ruin. So Paul's reason why men should bear the responsibility of leadership and teaching in the church is because in creating Adam first, God taught that men should take responsibility for leadership and women are to compliment their role. The fall of Adam and Eve shows that the neglect of this divine pattern leads to damage and disorder.

Therefore it is clear I trust that those churches like our own who believe that certain roles within the church are only open to men is based on God's creation order and not out of prejudice or bias against women, as people would want you to believe. Those Christians who argue that Paul's prohibition over women had to do with his culture completely ignores these verses about God's

created order, and therefore as I said last time the debate over women's ministry has sadly left the pages of scripture.

We all need to get back to God's word in order to discern his mind on this and every matter, for far too often the debate has to do with seeking to apply the world's belief on this issue, to the church. Let us never be guilty of that and let us always hold firm to what the scriptures says even though I believe that the pressure to abandon such a teaching will become greater as people apply equal opportunity laws and human right laws to their quest for equality in function as well as status. It was never God's intention to have men and women equal in function we are suppose to compliment one another, with women being strong in areas where men are weak and men being strong in areas where woman are weak. When men and women are fulfilling their roles as God has ordained them, then we will have harmony within the church, within society and within our marriages.

Just a short word in conclusion on the very difficult verse at the end of this chapter, verse 15. I confess I don't know what it means, and it seems that neither do many of the commentaries. There are three possibilities.

- i) It means that God will physically keep women safe through the pain of childbearing, which after all is one of the effects of the fall.
- ii) It means that women will be saved spiritually through the most significant birth to a woman; that is the birth of the Messiah who would reverse the effects of the fall on repentant sinners.
- iii) It means that godly women will find joy and fulfilment in their role as child bearers and Mothers. They might have been the first to fall into sin but they can do something about it by raising godly children.

I prefer the third option but we can be sure that it does not mean that woman are spiritually saved from sin through childbearing for that would contradict the clear bible's teaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

Amen