

The Church as a Family - Kevin Miller, 30 minutes, **1 Timothy 2:8-15** (#530)

Introduction: J. C. Ryle was a pastor in Victorian England who died over 100 years ago. Among his many helpful qualities, there is a quote from him that stands out to me, something that he once wrote about holding to the Scriptures: “Here is rock: all else is sand.” What the Bible says is what is true, what is best, what can be infinitely trusted to not lead us astray. Everything else is suspect in comparison.

As we continue in **1 Timothy 2**, I feel the need to remind us of that truth. These verses today are loaded with controversy – not only because there are some things here that are hard to interpret, which is true. But even more than that, it is because what the Scriptures record about men and women rubs completely across the grain of what our culture has trumpeted for many decades now. There are few passages less popular than this one with our world. Yet, here is what I would urge of you: don’t let culture or popularity or even “what feels right” be your guide. Instead, let’s come to the Scriptures with an attitude of trust. We may not know how to square every detail of this passage, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t obey what it says. As Kevin DeYoung has pointed out in his extremely helpful book titled “Men and Women in the Church,” passages like these call us to SCAN, by which he means that we need to remember that “the Bible is sufficient for life and godliness. The Bible is clear in all its big ideas. The bible is authoritative in all that it claims. And the Bible is necessary in order to know God’s will and God’s ways.” So it is here. Let’s see God’s will and His ways in the inspired Words before us...

2:8 First, Paul speaks to men. He’ll return to them again in the next chapter by speaking about how the church family makes progress on the Gospel mission. Here, he calls men to prayer. Not to earning money. Not to being smart. Not to

climbing the corporate ladder or acquiring more and more stuff. Not to getting rich. Paul's call for men is not that they give themselves to all the things that our world (and the Ephesian world, for that matter) would say are important. Instead, Paul calls men to devote themselves to prayer. Not to anger – oh so popular today, oh so accepted no matter where you land politically and socially. Not to quarreling – no less popular, when it seems that everyone everywhere thinks that the best way to express themselves is to argue with others. How radical would it be, men, if we were known more for our prayers than our arguments? More for how we seek the Lord on behalf of all people than for our anger at things we don't like in the world? How will these words of Paul change you? What will you do this very week to give yourself to prayer that is transformed by the Scriptures?

2:9-10 Ladies, this second part of the chapter is for you. Notice I said “for you,” not “against you.” Paul's goal is the same as with the men – how will you fit into the mission of the church? What's your role in this God-glorifying, Gospel-displaying congregation? Paul answers with two truths...

The first: Just as men are tempted towards anger and quarreling, so you many of you ladies are tempted towards idolizing beauty and outward appearance. I won't pretend to fully grasp the pressures, but I can readily identify them by every beauty product commercial that comes along. I can clearly see what our world's message to you is with every magazine I pass at the supermarket checkout. Don't believe the lie! Your worth is more than your looks. This is why Paul calls the Ephesian ladies – and you – to value more than fading physical beauty. Instead, how you dress should reflect godliness. How you act shouldn't be all about drawing attention to yourself. Instead, be known for actions that bring glory to God.

Let me be clear: this doesn't mean that women don't need to pray just as it doesn't mean that men don't need to have faithful actions. Paul's point is that prayer and faithful actions are the antidotes to the God-less trends of our world.

2:11-15 In a similar vein then, as Paul transitions to talking about what it looks like for a church to hold out the Gospel to one another and to the world, he speaks to your role in the church, ladies. His arguments for quietness and submissiveness have reasons beyond what our world might think. We are often told that these calls are oppressive to women, that they reek of male privilege. I would argue the opposite: Paul's point is that women should be women, not only in private but also in public; just as men should be men. As we read elsewhere about the ordering of a Christian household around men's and women's roles as given in the Scriptures, so Paul argues that this same pattern should be evident in the church. How so?

Paul makes two arguments from **Genesis**. The first relates to the order of creation: Adam was formed first, then Eve. This doesn't mean that Adam has more worth or value than Eve. If that were so, then all of the creatures formed before Adam would have more worth and value than he. Instead, it shows that Adam was given a role of authority: he was to name the creatures, remember? When Eve was created, she was given a role as a helpmate of Adam. Not a slave, note. In fact, God Himself is called a "helper" when it comes to Israel at times. So ladies, you have a role that God Himself honors. What's more, DeYoung points out that this is perfectly consistent with what we see all throughout the Old Testament: the firstborn male receives special rights and responsibilities not because they are "better" than or more of a person than any other children, but simply because they are the firstborn. Paul's point is that the Lord created man and woman with distinct

roles that ought to be maintained because they reflect God's intentions in how He has made creation and humanity.

Second, Paul's argument is that Eve was deceived. Adam sinned as well, but Eve was deceived when she took the lead and prompted Adam to sin. Paul's point isn't to blame Eve and let Adam off the hook, but rather it is that Eve reversed the order of what God had done when He created men and women. In doing so, she acted contrary to her God-given purpose just as Adam acted contrary to his God-given purpose. Paul's point is that this is a warning, as if to say: "the Fall is an example of what happens when men and women don't take God's created roles seriously."

Paul's call then, is that the church rightly reflect this equality-with-distinction that male and female share by men taking the lead when it comes to teaching and authority in Christ's church. Therefore, for a woman to teach men in the church or to have authority over the men in the congregation, reverses the plan that God has given. So, what does it mean for a woman to learn quietly and in submissiveness? Paul's answer: the role of a lady is not to be the teacher of the congregation (that's the explanation of "learn quietly") and she is not to have authority over the men in the congregation (that's the explanation of the "with all submissiveness" part).

Now, I fully realize that's a hard sell in our world. We think in terms of power and recognition, and so we have this idea that if any given role isn't open to every person, male or female, then that's oppressive and wrong. Yet Paul's point is exactly the opposite: it isn't about power. It isn't about recognition. It's about trusting that God's plan, His creation, His order is what's best. It's about showing Christ and the church not only in our marriages and homes – you can see **Ephesians 5** for more on that – but also in how we meet together as Christians.

All of this is why the very last verse of this chapter refers to what uniquely belongs to women: childbearing. The idea isn't that a women must bear children to be saved – that would contradict what Paul has said elsewhere about salvation being only by grace through faith. Instead, the point is that embracing God's roles for men and women – and bearing children is a role unique to women – ends up being the best plan for the whole world. Childbearing, after all, is how the Messiah enters into the world. Embracing God's plan means not trying to take Adam's role, but instead believing that God has a purpose in how He has created male and female. How is that purpose shown here? By trusting in God's promised Messiah – born from a woman. What does it take to hold on to counter-cultural beliefs like these? Paul answers: faith, love, holiness, and self-control.

Let me conclude, then, with two challenges, one social and the other personal:

Socially, from speaking with many of you men and women, I know full well how concerned you are about our rapidly changing world, particularly with regard to gender and homosexuality. You believe – as well you should – that God created male and female. You believe that this should be upheld throughout our society. Let me challenge you that it isn't possible to hold to that truth about male and female, while rejecting these related truths here in **1 Timothy**. Paul's whole point is that male and female matter immensely. His entire purpose is to show that God has a point for some humans to be male and some to be female. Do you want to promote this distinction as being a good thing? Do you want to help the world see that men and women are equal before the Lord, yet each created for a distinct purpose? Then you need to do that not only through your voting or what you say online, but even more so through holding to what the Scriptures say about male

and female overall. What a witness to our world it would be if men loved their wives and if their wives respected their husbands! And if churches honored men and women as Paul teaches on here! Do you realize how many arguments related to gender that would defang right there? Do you understand how many folks try to support ideas of sexuality that aren't Biblical because of the abuses of men and women in history? We as a church have a counter-cultural opportunity, one that you don't even have to stand on a street corner to accomplish. True manhood and womanhood comes from God's design, not our world's. We each need to live that out, to ask the Lord to help us better understand and apply the picture of Christ and the church that we are called to. And parents, your children need to see this and be taught this picture as well – to see it lived in your home and in the church. If you truly are concerned about ideas of transgenderism, what your kids need to see from you is the correct, God-given picture of what male and female are about.

Second, the personal application. Ladies, my own imperfections in teaching God's Word aside: if you are offended by what the Scriptures say here, if you are looking to explain these verses away, if your complaint is that they've often been misused by men to oppress women (which is sadly true), then I call you to hear again the Lord's word: this is what is true. This is what is best. Not what some political group says. Not what history tells you. Or commercials. Will you trust the Lord with your identity just as you trust Him with your salvation? Men: will you trust that the Lord knows best what is needed in this world? Frankly, a lot of the motivation for ladies to teach and preach in the church is because you won't take responsibility, get trained, and stand up. Will you trust Him and respond with faithful, humble, leadership? For us all, isn't this the call: to trust our Savior more than ourselves, more than our culture, more than what we see in this world? Let's give ourselves to that kind of trust as we worship Him now...