



1 Timothy

RBS
1 Timothy 2:1-15

Lesson 2: Jesus and His Church

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

Doctrinal Focus: God’s people must live lives of godliness and prayer for this is good in the sight of God.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1–15.

In chapter 2 of this letter, Paul begins to provide instruction for conduct within the local church. Special attention is focused on the leadership of the church. After a brief introduction (1 Timothy 2:1-7), Paul provides some general principles of conduct for public worship (1 Timothy 2:8-10), followed by qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 2:11 – 3:7) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:7-13), and concluding with a statement on the nature of the church and the mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 3:14-16).

Verses 1-7

In 1 Timothy 1, the apostle Paul warns Timothy about false teachers in the church and their dangerous misuse of the law of God. In order to safeguard the church from such teachers, Paul will set forth instructions and qualifications for appropriate church leadership in the form of elders and deacons (1 Timothy 2:11-13). Before this, however, we find some more general principles about Christian conduct and the true spiritual nature of the church in verses 1-7.

Paul begins by exhorting God’s people to pray for all people, especially for leaders in the local community (i.e., kings and people in high positions). By beginning with an exhortation to prayer, we come to appreciate the way in which God desires his people to be known in and to the world—not as people who complain, argue, gossip, or slander those who serve as leaders in

this broken and fallen world, but as people of faith who look to the LORD for their needs and appreciate those appointed by God to lead. People of faith are people who pray, and people who pray are enabled by the Spirit to lead a godly life in this world. This is a life characterized by peacefulness, quiet, and dignity. As such, not only do we pray for the world, but we also serve as living examples of the power of the gospel for the world. Ultimately, however, our lives of prayer reflect the value of the one to whom we pray, God himself.

This God to whom we pray is alone worthy of our prayers. Why? Because he is the one and only savior, and he desires to save. His grace is generous. It is not restricted to the Israelites alone, but extends to all of the nations, as Paul’s ministry testifies—the apostle to the nations (i.e., Gentiles in 1 Timothy 2:7).

But how does this salvation work? We are told in 1 Timothy 2:4 that this salvation comes with the knowledge of the truth, and it is the power of this truth that saves. The first truth is that there is only one God (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:4-5), and that this God is known only through his one Son, Jesus Christ our one mediator, who testified, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). The second saving truth is that this mediator, the man Christ Jesus, gave himself as a ransom for people from all nations. A ransom is the price paid to buy

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someone out of bondage, in this case the bondage of sin and eternal death. The price paid was the life of the mediator himself—*“for our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). And so, Jesus Christ is the God-man, through whom we are reconciled to God. This is by grace alone through faith alone. The exclusivity of these truths must be emphasized. There is only one God, the creator of heaven and earth. This one and only God sent his one and only Son into this world in order to save his lost people by paying the ransom price with his life. As such, Christians are a purchased people and forever belong to the one who purchased them. Thus, as Paul begins to describe life in the church, he is talking about those people purchased out of death and slavery and gathered as the redeemed people of God.

Verses 8-10

Having identified some fundamental principles of conduct (1 Timothy 2:1-3) and the way of church membership (1 Timothy 2:4-6), the apostle Paul moves forward to enumerate specific instructions for the gathered church and its leadership. In each case, Paul will provide specific instructions for both men and women.

In verses 8-10, Paul begins with some general principles of conduct, first for men and then for women. The context appears to be public worship, for there is the raising of hands in prayer and a description of appropriate clothing not suited to daily work.

Paul begins with the men in verse 8. Positively, men are to be characterized by prayer in public worship (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1). Negatively, they are not to be characterized by anger or quarreling. Recall from chapter 1 that the false teachers were promoting speculations and vain discussions within the church over myths and endless genealogies (1 Timothy 1:3-7). It appears that heated debates over these issues had taken over the life of the church in public worship and the apostle Paul wanted to correct this. Paul's instructions here do not forbid the consideration of difficult doctrinal issues within the context of the local church. Rather, it safeguards public worship and provides a unified starting point for the taking up of such issues.

Indeed, Paul deals with many of these very difficult issues in some of his letters. However, such issues are not to dominate the public assembly of God's people for worship.

After describing the conduct of the men in worship, Paul turns his attention to the women of the church (1 Timothy 2:9-10). In these verses, the topic is not prayer and arguing, but dress and propriety. Very early in church history, it appears that assembly for public worship constituted a special time in the life of God's people. Because of this, people in many cultures have thought to dress in a special way. Paul is simply urging that women who attend public worship should dress with respectable modesty. The attire of women should not distract the men or parade wealth and status. When the church comes together, it comes as God's covenant family, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul's instructions for men and women in these few verses exhibit the same basic principle. When the church is gathered for worship, it is gathered to give *all* glory and honor to God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Men who argue and women who dress inappropriately are simply looking to draw attention to themselves rather than to God, and this is the opposite of true, biblical worship.

Verses 11-15

In this next section, Paul begins a discussion of leaders in the church and their qualifications. In the case of elders, it begins with women in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and then continues with men in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Like the previous section, and the section on deacons that will follow (1 Timothy 3:8-13), these discussions are organized by gender—women and then men, or men and then women.

Paul's exclusion of women from eldership in the church can be divided into two sections: (1) the prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11-12; and (2) the rationale for the prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:13-15. It is important to remember that these instructions are limited to the context of the local church, especially as it is assembled for public worship. In this particular context, Paul has prohibited women from serving as elders.

The prohibition itself is simple and straightforward. It appears in 1 Timothy 2:12, *“I do not permit a*

woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man." In this context, teaching and exercising authority are not two different things, but one being the expression of the other. In other words, women are prohibited from the authoritative act of teaching men in the context of the local church. It is this prohibition against teaching that precludes a woman from the office of elder, because a primary function and qualification for an elder is teaching (cf. 3:2, "*skillful in teaching*"). Though prohibited from teaching men in the context of the local church as an elder, women are, in fact, commanded to learn in submission and quietness. This learning will bear fruit when passed along to other, younger women and children.

Paul's commands about women teaching and learning in the context of the local church has occasioned considerable and, at times, heated discussion. Thankfully, the biblical text has provided three reasons that ground this command in the redemptive work of God, all of which derive from Genesis 2 – 3.

The first reason for Paul's prohibition is the order of creation. "*Adam was formed first, then Eve*" (1 Timothy 2:13). In Genesis 2, it is recorded that man Adam was created first (Genesis 2:7), and then the woman Eve (Genesis 2:21-22). It is also recorded why God created the woman: (1) so that man should not be alone; and (2) in order that he might have a helper fit (or suitable) for him. Thus, there is something about the order of creation, a time before the fall of humanity into sin, that grounds the biblical prohibition against women teaching men in the context of the local church as church office holders or elders.

The second reason provided by the biblical text is related to the fall of humanity through disobedience in Genesis 3. "*Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor*"

(1 Timothy 2:14). The events to which this text refer are recorded in Genesis 3:1-7, where the woman Eve is deceived by the serpent and his false teaching about the word of God. The emphasis in 1 Timothy 2 and in Genesis 3 is on deception. The woman was deceived by the serpent's false teaching, and so she is now precluded from teaching men in the context of the church. But Adam also sinned in Genesis 3. There is no doubt about this (cf. Romans 5:12-21). However, Adam's sin lacked the quality of deception. It appears that he sinned knowingly. This does not make Adam's sin any better than Eve's sin, rather it was much worse. It is simply that quality of deception in the sin and fall of Eve that provides the second ground for Paul's prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11.

The third and final ground for Paul's prohibition appears in verse 15: "*Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.*" This is perhaps the most difficult reason of the three to understand. One thing is clear, however. It does not mean that a woman is saved from sin unto eternal life only if she bears children. Given the pattern of the two previous commands, this statement likely refers back to God's post fall restoration of humanity in Genesis 3:15-16. Here, God promises that the woman, in pain and anguish, will bear a promised seed (Son) that will conquer and defeat the serpent and his offspring. Additionally, it is faith in this promised seed that will ultimately save us. Thus, Paul's rationale for the difficult prohibition in 2:11 is rooted in the creation, fall, and restoration of humanity.

However, it is also important to see Paul's balance in this matter. While there is this prohibition against public teaching in the church, he warmly commended those women who were actively engaged in the life of the church and who were working for it (e.g. Romans 16:1-2, 3, 6, 12).

Recommended Commentary

1 Timothy by Philip Ryken (Reformed Expository Commentaries)



1 Timothy Lesson 2

Questions for Discussion

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-15.

1. In 1 Timothy 2:1 and 2:8, the apostle Paul highlights prayer as a primary and defining characteristic of God's people assembled for worship. According to 1 Timothy 1, what is happening in worship that Paul is attempting to correct?
2. According to 1 Timothy 2:2, what type of lifestyle is good and pleasing to God, made possible only through his mediatorial-ransoming work?
3. According to 1 Timothy 2:1-7, is God concerned only for the people of Israel (the Jewish people), or do his concerns comprehend all nations and peoples (the Gentiles)? How is this expressed in the text? Are you concerned for the Jews and people of all nations of the world? How do you express your concern?
4. According to the biblical text, what is the way of salvation? How do we know God?
5. What does it mean that Jesus is a mediator? What is a ransom? What does it mean that Jesus gave himself as a ransom?
6. If you had to define the church based on 1 Timothy 2:4-7, how would you do it? Based on these verses, define the church.

7. When Paul addressed men in public worship (1 Timothy 2:8), what is his chief concern? How does this concern fit into the context of the Ephesian heresy described in chapter 1?
8. When Paul addressed women in public worship (1 Timothy 2:9-10), what is his chief concern? Why would modesty and propriety be important issues related to the worship of God?
9. What do Paul's instructions for men and women in 1 Timothy 2:8-10 have in common as they relate to public worship? What, therefore, is the purpose of worship?
10. According to the biblical text in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, what are women prohibited from doing in the context of the local church?
11. How are teaching and exercising authority related to each other? Does the biblical text prohibit women from teaching other women or children? Does this text prohibit women from teaching the Bible outside the church?
12. How must women learn in the context of the local church assembled for public worship? How can women learn outside the church?
13. What three reasons are listed in the text (1 Timothy 2:13-15) that support the prohibition against women teaching men in the context of the local church?
14. What is the significance of the fact that all three reasons listed in 1 Timothy 2:13-15 are rooted in the events of Genesis 2 – 3, specifically the creation, fall, and redemption of humanity?