

# 1 Timothy 2

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## Introduction.

One of the most difficult challenges that Christians from any time face is the task of turning away from the beliefs and practices of the culture in which they live and turning toward the beliefs and practices of the Bible. Certainly, this was a struggle for our brethren in the first century. Christians then who came from a Gentile background had to fight against being pulled back into the immoral, idolatrous world from which they came. Jewish Christians had to resist the temptation to return to the Law of Moses, which they and their ancestors had practiced for 1500 years.

When we look at these challenges to the faith of the saints 2000 years ago, it should come as no surprise to us that our faith faces similar challenges today. Even though the U. S. is a nominally Christian nation, we all know that many of the practices of the people around us differ from what Jesus has required. In our day and age, toleration has become almost a religion of its own, and anyone who dares to suggest that there is only one path to God and that anyone who wants to come to Him must walk that path is guilty of the cardinal sin of intolerance. Today, modesty is almost unheard of, even among believers. People are very resistant to the idea that they must dress in a righteous way, and instead choose to wear whatever they think flatters them or attracts the attention of the opposite sex. Likewise, it's an article of faith in our time that the equality of men and women means that women should be allowed to do whatever men do, without restriction. I've been to weddings before where the officiant, dressed up in all sorts of ecclesiastical finery, was a woman.

As Christians, this leaves us with a choice. We can follow the world, and adopt its attitudes toward all these things, or we can follow the word. Of course, if we want to please God and go to heaven, this really isn't a choice at all. Let's see what the Scripture has to say about these controversial subjects as we look at 1 Timothy 2.

## Prayer and God's Will.

Although this chapter contains many provocative statements, it starts in a relatively mild way with a discussion of **PRAYER**. This appears in 1 Timothy 2:1-2. The first thing we should notice about this text is that it begins with "Therefore". In other words, Paul is referring back to the discussion of 1 Timothy 1 to supply the reason why these prayers need to be offered. When we look back at that context, we see that it contains Paul's injunction to Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. That means that we need to consider the first two verses of this chapter in light of Christian warfare. When Paul urges us to pray, then, for the governmental authorities so that we can lead a quiet life, that quiet life isn't something we're to seek for its own sake. Instead, it's because a tranquil nation is the best environment for us to practice our faith and spread the gospel. If the government isn't doing its job, that makes our work more difficult.

There are several applications we can draw from this text. First of all, just like Christians 2000 years ago were to pray for the king and the authorities, as Christians today, we should pray for our president and the members of our government. Second, we should acknowledge how blessed we are in our political system. It's very fashionable these days for people in this state and this country to complain about the rascals in Springfield or Washington. As many of you know, I've been inclined to engage in a complaint or two myself. However, we need to be very cautious about letting these disparaging remarks escape our lips. All government is from God, and that means that our government is from God. We have the leaders that He wants us to have, and as much as they may disappoint us in other ways, they get the most important thing right. They let us follow Christ without official hindrance, and that's a blessing that most first-century Christians did not know. We need to be thankful for it and for our government, rather than being ungrateful.

Paul gives us further insight into why this blessing of a tranquil nation is so important when he describes **GOD'S WILL** for us and for all men. We find this in 1 Timothy 2:3-7. This text begins with an affirmation of what we've discussed already. God wants us to live without governmental persecution because that provides us with the easiest road to heaven. However, that road isn't just for us. God wants everyone to be saved. He wants everyone to learn and to obey His will. In the midst of this very practical discussion, this is a critical doctrinal point for addressing the false doctrine of Calvinism. Calvinism teaches that men are born without free will, that we are not saved or lost because of the choices that we make. Instead, before we are even born, God decides for us whether we get to go to heaven or not. If He numbers us with the righteous, there is nothing we can do to go to hell. On the other hand, though, if He numbers us with the unrighteous, there is nothing we can do to go to heaven, no matter how badly we might want to.

When we put this together with the idea that most men will be lost, Calvinism teaches that God created most people to suffer eternally in hell without any way to avoid the fire. Most of us find that idea revolting because it makes God sound basically evil rather than basically good. Thankfully, 1 Timothy 2:4 backs up our instinctive reaction. God hasn't chosen for most people to be lost. Instead, He wants everyone to be saved. Sadly, most people will end up rejecting Him, but that's their fault, not God's. We can be reassured that God loves us personally and wants us with Him.

Paul then moves on to describe some of the machinery that God uses to help people get to heaven. First of all, He gave us Jesus, who is the one Mediator between God and us. With His death, He settled the dispute that arose between God and man because of our sin. Notice, though, that Jesus isn't just a Mediator. He isn't just one possible path to God. He is the Mediator. Either we come to God through Him, or we don't come to God at all. That's true for us, and it's true for every human being on the planet. All other teachings, all other religions offer only a hope that is false.

Of course, the sacrifice of Jesus doesn't help anybody if nobody knows about it, and that's why God appointed Paul and the other apostles—to testify to the Savior who died and rose again for us. Even though the apostles are dead now, they still speak through the pages of the word. Once again, though, God's plan requires human messengers. As Christians today, it's our responsibility to point people to the word of God so that they can know the truth too.

### **Men, Women, and Their Roles.**

From there, Paul shifts to a brief discussion about **MEN AND WOMEN**. This discussion is found in 1 Timothy 2:8-10. It begins with a return to the earlier topic of prayer. Because God wants everyone to be saved, and because His servants, from Jesus to the apostles to us, are dedicated to the salvation of the lost, we ought to pray for an environment that makes salvation as easy as possible. He also tells us, though, how men are to pray. Contrary to what some charismatic churches believe, the emphasis here is not on the lifting of the hands. That was simply the cultural prayer posture of 2000 years ago. Instead, the emphasis is on the holiness of the hands. Whenever we pray, we must make sure first that our hands are not stained with the guilt of sin. Likewise, quarrels in the church and lack of faith can also short-circuit our connection to God. For our prayers to be effective, we must be holy, harmonious, and believing.

Even though women do not lead these public prayers, Paul continues on to reveal that God has expectations for their behavior too. He tells us that they must dress modestly and adorn themselves with good works. Although men certainly should not dress immodestly either, Paul's particular concern appears to be with the clothing and conduct of women. When we think of immodest clothing today, we typically think of clothing that is scanty or revealing. That wasn't the problem in the first century. Instead, their immodesty had more to do with being overdressed, with wearing elaborate hairstyles, costly jewelry, and expensive garments. However, there is a common thread to both of these immodesty problems. Whether a woman is wearing clothes that leave little of her body to the imagination or little of her wealth to the imagination, she is doing everything she can to attract attention to her and to her outward attributes. Paul's point is that that self-promoting attitude, no matter how it expresses itself, is sinful for the woman of God.

Instead of seeking to attract attention to her outside, the sister of Christ must look to draw attention to her inside. The true adornment of the godly woman cannot be found in her face or her figure or her wardrobe. Instead, it is found in the life of good works that she leads. When she dedicates herself to love, humility, and service, she might not catch the eyes of the world, but she will win favor in the eyes of God. The tragedy of immodest clothing, no matter how it is immodest, is that it takes the glory away from Christ and puts it on the flawed physical creation instead. By contrast, the woman is most glorious when she puts on good works, because then she adds to the eternal glory of Jesus.

The modesty of the woman of God also leads her to understand and submit to what the word says about **HER ROLE**. Look with me at the final passage today, 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Of all the subjects of 1 Timothy 2, this is the one that far and away generates the most outrage. I've known more than one sister in Christ who became furious when confronted with this and similar teachings. However, the point of the passage is quite plain. In a religious context, it's not the woman's role to be disruptive and seize center stage for herself. Instead, she is to be quiet and allow the man to lead. This doesn't mean that she can't ask a question in Bible class; the Greek word that's here translated as "quiet" carries with it the meaning of "peaceful", not "silent". However, when she does speak, she must take care that she isn't trying to teach the class from the pew or assert herself in any other unbecoming way. She must be submissive.

Likewise, in the church, the woman is not to teach or to exercise authority over a man. She cannot be the songleader, the preacher, the Bible-class teacher, or anything else where men are under her or following her lead. Paul explains this by pointing to the example of Eve, who was clearly the helpmeet to Adam's leader. Once again, the point is clear. God's will is that women must not lead in the church, and so we do not and must not have women leaders. When some people in the world find out about this, they accuse us of being backward and chauvinistic and all kinds of other things. Of course, that's not the case. Scripture aside, I couldn't care less what positions women assumed in the church. However, it's not up to us. God has defined the role of the woman for us. All that's left to us is to obey Him.

Naturally, none of this means that women aren't to be teachers. Instead, as we see in the last verse of the chapter, they have what is perhaps the most important teaching role of all. Where the daughter of the Father leaves her mark as a teacher is in teaching her own children. Day by day, year by year, as she patiently instructs her little ones in the way of the Lord, that's when she wins honor for herself in the kingdom. When her children live righteous lives, that's when they preserve her memory. That's just as true in me as it is for any child of a godly woman. It's not my place to assess my work as a preacher or a Christian, but whatever good I have done or will do is because of the teaching of my mother.