

1 Tim. 2:1 – 3:7

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VI. Instruction to Pray for All (2:1-7)

2:1 Therefore, I urge, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,² for kings and all those in high places, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and respectfulness.³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given at the right time.⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, not lying), a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth.

A. In light of the charge to oppose the false teachers, Timothy's first order of business was to see that prayers were offered for *all* people, to see that no group or class of people, including rulers and authorities, was excluded from the loving concern of the church.

1. Apparently the false teachers had a sectarian theology that emphasized God's love for some people, probably the Jews, *at the expense of* his love for all mankind, perhaps especially or most notably at the expense of his love for pagan rulers.

a. Note how Paul emphasized that his own sinfulness and persecution of the church did not put him beyond God's mercy.

b. Possibly this was related to their misuse of genealogies.

2. This elitism or exclusivity could cast the church as an enemy of (disloyal to) the society, which could *needlessly* disrupt the normal practice of their religion, which is living *within the society* lives of true devotion and moral earnestness (see, 1 Thess. 4:11-12). This, in turn, could hinder the church's influence.

B. Praying for *all people* is good and welcomed in God's sight, as he wants *all people* to be saved, meaning to come to a knowledge of the truth. For he is the God of all people, there being only one God; and Christ, who is the one mediator between God and mankind, gave himself a ransom for all people.

C. The universality of the gospel is evident in Paul's divine commission as apostle to the Gentiles.

VII. Instruction to Pray in the Right Way (2:8-15)

⁸ I want, therefore, the men in every place to pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or argument. ⁹ Likewise, [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency, not with elaborate hairstyles and gold or pearls or expensive garments ¹⁰ but [with] what is fitting for women who profess reverence for God by good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in quietness with full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; rather, she is to be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, by being deceived, came to be in transgression. ¹⁵ But the woman will be saved through child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification, with decency.

A. Given that God's concern for the salvation of all people is to be expressed in the prayers of the church, the men are to pray with hands not stained by anger and argument.

1. This instruction is probably related to the false teaching in that it produced controversy and disputes (see, 1 Tim. 6:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:23-24).

2. As Everett Ferguson notes, "The phrase 'in every place' (in Christian usage based on Mal. 1:11) seems to have had a special reference 'to every place of meeting,' and not the general adverbial sense of 'everywhere' (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:8; less obviously 2 Cor. 2:14)." *The Church of Christ*, p. 234. In other words, Paul is talking about public prayers when the church is gathered for worship.

B. Likewise, the women are to pray adorned with the virtues of modesty and decency -- not with excessive external ornamentation but with a character that is fitting for women committed to revering God through good deeds.

1. The first clause in v. 9 literally reads, "Likewise [also]¹ women in appropriate attire with modesty and decency to adorn themselves." The translator's choice is to supply "I want" from v. 8, thereby having "women" serve as the subject of only one infinitive ("to adorn"), or to supply "I want" and "to pray" from v. 8, thereby having "women" serve as the subject of both "to pray" and "to adorn."

a. In other words, v. 9a can be translated either: "Likewise, [I want] women to adorn themselves in appropriate attire, with modesty and decency, . . ." or "Likewise, [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency, . . ." Either translation is grammatically acceptable. Those favoring the latter (in meaning if not in actual translation) include Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 84; Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy/Titus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 93-95; I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 446-447; Jerome D. Quinn and William C.

¹ The presence of "also" in the text is disputed.

Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 215-216.

b. The choice is governed by the context of the passage and by the view one has from other texts of the propriety of women praying in the assembly. Given the focus on prayer throughout this section of Scripture, my understanding of 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and 11:2-16,² and the example of Acts 1:14 and 4:23-24, I am convinced that Paul here assumes the women will be praying, just as he assumes the men will be praying.

c. Some believe Paul's desire for "the *men* in every place to pray" means that women are not to pray (thus eliminating the second option), but that does not follow. He does not say he wants the men to pray; he says he wants the men to pray *without anger and argument*. He assumes they will be praying and urges them to do so with the proper attitude so that their prayers will not be hindered (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:7). If on the brink of recess a teacher said, "I want the boys to play without fighting," no one would think the teacher was thereby excluding girls from playing. Rather, they would conclude that the boys had a problem with fighting that the teacher did not want carried over into recess.

d. Whether it is permissible for women to "lead" prayers in a worship assembly is complicated by the fact such terminology is foreign to the New Testament. It boils down, in my judgment, to whether female participation in that role would violate the biblical principle of male leadership. I'm inclined to think that it would. However, in an atypical context like "open praying" (i.e., where all are invited to pray without any appointment or designation), that concern would not seem to apply. Of course, the potential impact on congregational unity must factor into any shift in practice.

2. Excessive external adornment is out of place for a child of God because it overemphasizes the external and reflects an inappropriate desire for attention. (When we say, "He or she has to be the center of attention," it is a criticism, a negative judgment about the person's character.) The primary concern of the saint is the inner person, the beauty of one's character.

a. When the adornment is excessive by virtue of expense, it adds a sense of arrogance or elitism. When the excessive adornment carries (cultural) connotations of moral laxity, wearing it shows an even greater emphasis on the external (one considers wearing it more important than the impression of looseness it conveys).

b. It is not clear if the Christian women were actually adorning themselves this way or if this was just part of a stock criticism used to emphasize the importance of the inner person. It seems there were wealthy people in Ephesus (1 Tim. 6:17-19), so it certainly could be a real issue.

² In short, I believe women are prohibited in Scripture from delivering in the assembly God's authoritative message to men, either directly by prophesying or teaching or indirectly by challenging the prophecies or teaching of others. So women cannot preach or teach in the assembly. Prayer, on the other hand, is a nondidactic expression of devotion to God and therefore is not inconsistent with the submission a woman is required to manifest in the assembly.

c. The issue with modesty today, as it relates to dress, is usually how much one reveals rather than how extravagantly one accessorizes, but in this day of tattoos and piercings, the latter can also come into play. The principle, as I see it, is that a Christian is not to "overemphasize" the external or to draw "inordinate" attention to herself or himself. These judgments are sometimes difficult, but if what you are wearing raises eyebrows and turns heads, that's a pretty good sign you're over the line. We can be fashionable, but not daring. We should stay on the reserved or conservative side.

d. I think this text also is relevant to other things, such as spending huge sums of money on things like plastic surgery or hair transplants. I think that reflects the kind of overemphasis on the external that Paul here condemns.

C. The modest and decent character that is the true adornment of Christian women is reflected, in part, in their submission to male leadership in the church. 1 Pet. 3:1-6 conveys a similar idea regarding submission to husbands.

1. When the church is assembled, women are to learn in quietness with full submission. They are not to teach men or to exercise authority over them (dictate to them - BDAG).

a. In this context, I suspect the latter prohibition refers to correcting or challenging what was taught (what we might call "setting them straight" or "putting them in their place"). I believe a similar concern is expressed in 1 Cor. 14:35, where women were apparently challenging the prophets by quizzing them (under the pretext of wanting simply to learn).

b. Paul says that rather than act that way, the woman is to be quiet, that is, she is not to be outspoken, not to be challenging or correcting.

2. This submission was probably threatened by the overrealized eschatology in the false teachers' doctrine (the distinctions were no longer significant). You see the same coupling of overrealized eschatology and ignoring of sex distinctions in 1 Corinthians.

D. This is not because women are intellectually or morally inferior to men, nor is it because women at that time were less educated than men. The reason, according to Paul (v. 13), is simply that "Adam was formed first, then Eve."

1. We would like for Paul to have explained how Adam's being created first translates into male leadership, but unfortunately for us, the notion of the "firstborn" being the leader required no explanation in the first century. It was considered obvious.

2. This answer just raises the deeper question of *why* God made man first instead of making woman first or making them at the same time from the dust of the ground. Ultimately the answer is that God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) and that he chose to do it that way.

a. One could just as well ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle, or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests. Why limit these roles to people who happen to be born in a certain lineage rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles?

b. And that is precisely what led to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and 250 community leaders opposed Moses and Aaron on the basis that they should have equal access to God. All Israel was holy, so no one family line should be exalted to the priestly function. It was a challenge to God's right to choose select groups for specific roles. And, as you know, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth, and the 250 community leaders were incinerated by God.

E. The fact men and women have different roles or functions does not mean that women are inferior to or less worthy than men.

1. Men and women are created equally in the image of God and together comprise mankind (Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1-2). In 1 Cor. 11:11-12 Paul points out that men and women are dependent on each other. In 1 Cor. 12:12-27, he makes clear that all who are in Christ are part of Christ's body and are equally precious; there are no second-class citizens in the kingdom. Peter describes husbands and wives as "co-heirs of the gracious gift of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). In terms of one's standing before God, Paul says in Gal. 3:28 that there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.

2. The feminist charge that any difference in role or function between men and women means that women are inferior to or less worthy than men is refuted in the example of God the Father and God the Son.

a. Jesus is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3, 15:27-28 (see also, Jn. 14:28), but it also demonstrated by a number of facts:

(1) He was sent by the Father (Mat. 10:40, 15:24, 21:37; Mk. 9:37, 12:6; Lk. 4:43, 9:48, 10:16, 20:13; Jn. 3:34, 4:34, 5:23, 5:30, 5:36-38, 6:29, 6:38-39, 6:44, 6:57, 7:16, 7:28-29, 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 9:4, 10:36, 11:42, 12:44-45, 12:49, 13:20, 14:24, 15:21, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:18, 17:21, 17:23, 17:25, 20:21; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:9-10, 4:14).

(2) He spoke the words of the Father (Jn. 7:16, 8:26-28, 8:38-40, 12:49-50, 14:24, 15:15).

(3) He came to do the Father's will (Jn. 4:34; 5:19, 6:38; 14:30; Heb. 10:5-9).

(4) He revealed the Father (Jn. 1:18, 12:45, 14:7-9, 17:6, 17:26; Heb. 1:1-4).

(5) He seeks to please, glorify, and honor the Father (Jn. 5:30, 8:29, 14:13, 17:1-5).

(6) He judges only as he hears from the Father (Jn. 5:30).

b. If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then certainly women can submit to male leadership in the church (and to the leadership of their husbands at home) without denying their equal dignity or value. They are acting like Christ! That parallel is specifically drawn in 1 Cor. 11:3.

F. In v. 14, Paul says, alluding to Gen. 3, that the woman, not Adam, was the one deceived in the Garden. In other words, the serpent approached her rather than Adam, and in so doing sought to subvert the divinely ordained pattern of leadership. Thomas Schreiner expresses the point well (*Women in the Church*, p. 145):

[Paul] wants to focus on the fact that the serpent approached and deceived Eve, not Adam. The significance of the serpent targeting Eve is magnified, for apparently Adam was with Eve (Gen. 3:6) during the temptation. In approaching Eve, then, the serpent subverted the pattern of male leadership and interacted only with Eve during the temptation. Adam was present throughout and did not intervene. The Genesis temptation, therefore, is a parable of what happens when male leadership is abrogated. Eve took the initiative in responding to the serpent, and Adam let her do so. Thus, the appeal to Genesis 3 serves as a reminder of what happens when God's ordained pattern is undermined.

G. The point of v. 15 seems to be that, contrary to what the false teachers were claiming, women remain faithful, and thus are saved, by accepting their God-given role, which role is symbolized by the distinctly female ability of childbearing. In other words, they are not to define their faithfulness, to define their Christian calling, in terms of the male role. Their salvation is to be "worked out" (Phil. 2:12) in a somewhat different way or on a somewhat different path than the salvation of men. Schreiner has this to say about the verse (*Women in the Church*, p. 151-152):

This does not mean that all women must have children in order to be saved. Paul is hardly attempting to be comprehensive here. He has elsewhere commended the single state (1 Cor. 7). He selects childbearing because it is the most notable example of the divinely intended difference in role between men and women, and most women throughout history have had children. Thus, Paul generalizes from the experience of most women in using a representative example of women maintaining their proper role. . . .

When Paul says that a woman will be saved by childbearing, he means, therefore, that they will be saved by adhering to their ordained role. Such a statement is apt to be misunderstood (and often has been), and thus a further comment is added for explanation. Women will be saved "if they remain in faith and love and sanctification along with discretion." Thereby Paul shows that it is not sufficient for salvation for Christian women merely to bear children; they must also persevere in faith, love, holiness, and presumably other virtues. The reference to "discretion" (*sophrosunes*) harkens back to the same word in verse 9 and also functions to tie the entire text together. Paul does not imply that all women must bear children to be saved. His purpose is to say that women will not be saved if they do not practice good works. One indication that women are in their proper role is if they do not reject bearing children as evil, but bear children in accord with their proper role.

VIII. Instruction About Elders (3:1-7)

3:1 The saying is sure: If anyone aspires to the position of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer be above reproach, the husband of one wife, level-headed, sensible, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, uncontentious, and not loving money. ⁴ He must be managing his own household well, having his children in submission with all respectfulness (⁵ if anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?). ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, lest, having become conceited, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ And it is also necessary that he have a good reputation with those outside, lest he fall into disgrace and the trap of the devil.

A. Given the problem with some of the elders in Ephesus, Paul lays out for Timothy and the church the standards to which elders are to conform. Those who do not meet these standards are not to be appointed to the eldership (see 1 Tim. 5:22), and elders who deviate from these standards are to be disciplined (1 Tim. 5:19-20) and, if necessary, replaced (1 Tim. 5:22).

B. Paul affirms that the position or office of overseer (the "overseership") is a noble task. He probably makes that point because some of the current elders had given the position a bad name.

1. As you know, the churches in the N.T. were governed by a plurality of local elders. Three specific Greek terms refer to this one leadership position: *presbuteros* (translated elder), *episkopos* (translated overseer or bishop), and *poimen* (translated shepherd or pastor). The interchangeability of these terms is clear from several passages:

a. In Acts 20:17 Paul sends for the "elders" of the church in Ephesus. In 20:28 he reminds them that they are "overseers" and commands them "to shepherd" (verb *poimaino*) the church of God.

b. In Tit. 1:5 Paul tells Titus to appoint "elders" in every city, and in 1:7 these elders are called "overseers."

c. In 1 Pet. 5:1 Peter addresses the "elders," and in 5:2 he tells them "to shepherd" (verb *poimaino*) God's flock.

2. The task is a noble one because it involves the care and nurture of the people of God. In brief, elders are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation (see, Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:5, 5:17; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2). And they will give an account for how they handle that responsibility.

3. Those who are under the oversight of elders are to obey the word of the Lord that is presented by them, respect them for their work, support them, and cooperate with them (see, 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17).

C. Because being an overseer is such a significant task, those who serve in that capacity must live exemplary lives. In Paul's words, they must be "above reproach." That, of course, does not mean sinless, or else there could be no elders. It means their lives are characterized by the virtues or qualities he lists.

1. The phrase "husband of one wife" most likely means "faithful to his one wife" (as rendered in NEB). George Knight (p. 158-159) quotes the following from C. H. Dodd: "The natural meaning of *mias gunaikos aner* is surely, as Theodore [of Mopsuestia] says, 'a man who having contracted a monogamous marriage is faithful to his marriage vows,' excluding alike polygamy, concubinage and promiscuous indulgence" [cite omitted]. Knight then adds, "'Promiscuous indulgence' would encompass Jesus' words on wrongful divorce and remarriage in Mt. 5:32; 19:9."

2. Level-headed, sensible, and respectable relate to a person's self-mastery or self-control. Such a person is sober and prudent, not controlled by his passions.

3. All Christians are to be hospitable (1 Pet. 4:9; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2), but those who serve as elder must be especially so.

4. Elders must be skillful in teaching because their fundamental tool of leadership is teaching and preaching (1 Tim. 5:17). As Paul says in Tit. 1:9, they must be skillful in teaching "that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (see also 2 Tim. 2:24-25).

5. One area in which an elder must exercise self-control is in his use of alcohol. He must not be given to drunkenness. That doesn't mean, of course, that Christians

who are not elders are free to get drunk. Drunkenness is sinful (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3). It means that this cannot be an elder's area of weakness.

6. In temper and temperament, an elder is to be gentle, not violent, and is to be uncontentious. Unlike the false teachers in Ephesus, an elder is not to be looking for an argument. When people need correction, he seeks to do it gently. As John Stott puts it, "His patience may be sorely tried by demanding and aggravating people, but like his Master he will seek to be gentle, never crushing a bruised reed or snuffing out a wick that is burning low."

7. An elder cannot be a lover of money, which is what the false teachers in Ephesus were (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:2). If money is too important to him, he will wind up serving it rather than Christ (see Mat. 6:24).

8. An elder must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. The reason is that one who is unable to manage his own family properly cannot be expected to care properly for God's church. If he cannot generate obedience and respect in his own children, he is unlikely to be able to generate it in God's children.

9. An elder cannot be a recent convert because one who receives too much responsibility too soon is more likely to become conceited, like the false teachers at Ephesus (1 Tim. 6:4). An inflated ego leads readily to condemnation because a prideful person, a "know-it-all," relishes cutting his own trail and refuses to accept correction.

10. An elder must not only be "above reproach" within the community of faith, he must also have a good reputation with those outside the church. One who has a bad reputation among outsiders can easily fall into disgrace (or "incur slander" - Kelly) either because "unsympathetic outsiders will put the most unfavorable interpretation on his slightest word or deed" (Kelly) or because they will be motivated to expose the particulars of the bad reputation. For the church or its leaders to be disgraced is to fall into the devil's trap.