

Behave Yourself!

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Date: 09 February 2022

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. 1 Timothy chapter 2.

As we said, we're continuing our study in this letter. 1 Timothy chapter 2.

We're going to look at verses 8 down to verse Mark 15. But if we just read again at verse 8. 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 8.

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling. Behave yourself.

That's what my mother used to always say to me. When we were sitting in church on Sunday morning. I would be restless in the pew or fidgeting with something or annoying my sisters.

[1 : 03] And my mother would have to lean over and say, Murdo, stop it. Behave yourself. We're in God's house. So behave yourself. And needless to say, I didn't do as I was told.

But you know, in many ways, that's the information and the very simple instruction that Paul is giving to Timothy here. Behave yourself. Behave yourself.

Because Paul here, he's teaching Timothy how men and women ought to behave themselves in God's house. And he's explaining and he's emphasizing what public worship should look like according to the God-given roles and responsibilities of men and women.

Because as Paul taught the church in Corinth, he said to the church in Corinth, he said, Let all things be done decently and in order. Let all things be done decently and in order.

And so for Paul, public worship is not to be conducted and carried out any which way we like. Public worship is to be conducted and carried out according to God's word and God's will and God's way.

[2 : 13] There's not to be chaos and confusion because that's not the God we worship. We don't worship a God of chaos and confusion. No, we worship a God of order and organization.

And we see all that, particularly in the creation, the creation itself, where God created the heavens and the earth in the space of six days and he saw that it was all very good.

He didn't create everything in one day, not that he couldn't, but he created it over the space of six days in order to order it and to organize it.

And within that created order and organization, we see from Genesis 1 that God ordained order and organization because he ordained day and night.

He ordained darkness and light. He ordained times and seasons. He ordained men and women. In fact, in this section, Paul uses the creation as an example in order to explain and emphasize that public worship is to be conducted and carried out with order and organization, which includes the God-given roles and responsibilities of men and women within the church of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 33] Now, as you know, Paul here in these verses, he tackles what we'll call two hot potatoes, women praying and women preaching, women praying and women preaching.

But the thing I don't want us to do this evening is because we should never do it, is come to Scripture with an assertive or even an arrogant attitude because we don't have everything right, but Scripture always does.

And this is, as you know, this is God's Word. This is inspired, it's inerrant, and it's infallible.

Therefore, we are not above the Word of God. We are always under the Word of God.

That's why the pulpit is above the people, because we are always sitting under the Word of God, which means that we are to humbly and wholeheartedly submit and surrender to the Word of God.

And so as we come to a passage like this one this evening, we must always read it and understand it within its context. Because as the saying goes, a text taken out of context and used as a proof text is a pretext, which makes a con of the text.

[4 : 48] And you know, that's what can often happen with reading and understanding the teaching of the Bible. Because sadly, sometimes the Bible can be used and abused to pick and choose the bits we like and the bits we don't like.

The Bible can be used and abused to suit our own agendas and to fit in with our own thoughts and theories. But the thing is, we don't interpret Scripture.

Scripture interprets Scripture. That's our confessional position. Scripture interprets Scripture.

Therefore, I want us to humbly and wholeheartedly consider our headings this evening.

Women praying and women preaching. Women praying and women preaching. So first of all, women praying.

Look at verse 8. Paul says, I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. Likewise also, that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold pearls, gold or pearls or costly attire.

[5 : 58] But with what is proper for women who profess godliness with good works. Now, as you know, when Paul wrote this letter, it was a personal and pastoral letter to Timothy.

And Timothy, he was a young minister. He was preaching and pastoring in the congregation of the city of Ephesus. And Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus because, as you know, there were erroneous elders who were loose on the law and they were glossing over the gospel.

And their false teaching was infecting and influencing the Christians in Ephesus. But dealing with these erroneous elders was no easy task. In fact, there were so many problems in Ephesus that Timothy, he wanted to throw in the towel and just walk away altogether.

But as we've learned from Paul's letter already, we've learned that Paul exhorted and encouraged Timothy to stay there, stand firm, and stay focused.

Because, as he said at the beginning of chapter 2, when you face problems, prayer is priority.

Prayer is particular. And prayer is for all people.

[7 : 10] And with that, Paul proceeded to explain and to emphasize to Timothy what public worship should look like according to the God-given roles and responsibilities of men and women.

And he says in verse 8, I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.

Now, I want to be clear. When Paul says, I desire, or I will, or I wish, Paul is not speaking about his personal desire or what he wants public worship to look like or what he wishes the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the church should be.

You know, people often accuse Paul of being a dictator or a disciplinarian in the church of Jesus Christ. And they say that Paul was someone who just threw his weight around all the time in all these churches that he went to.

But I don't see that at all because Paul's desire here is a divine desire. It's a desire for God's will to be done.

[8 : 22] And I say that because the word Paul uses here in verse 8 for the word desire or will, it's the same word that's used throughout the New Testament to describe a divine desire.

It's used of Jesus when he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. When Jesus said, Lord, if you are willing, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done.

Peter also used this word when explaining and emphasizing that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance.

And so Paul's desire here, when he says, I desire, it's a divine desire. And Paul, you know, Paul probably knew that this section of his letter was going to be contentious and maybe even a bit controversial, which is why before he even said it, Paul reminds Timothy and the congregation in Ephesus, he reminds them in the previous verse that he's an ordained preacher and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

He says in verse 7, For this I was appointed, a preacher and an apostle. I am telling the truth. I am not lying. A teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

[9 : 40] Then he says, I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. Now last week we saw that Paul, he exhorted and encouraged the congregation in Ephesus to pray.

He said, pray, pray, pray because prayer is priority. Prayer is particular. He said supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings.

And then he also said, prayer is for all people. So we're to pray for everyone, everywhere, without exception, that they'll be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

But when Paul said that we're to pray for all people in verse 4, and we're to pray for all people in verse 1 and verse 3 and 4, the word that he uses there is the word anthropos, meaning mankind. So it includes men, women, boys and girls. But when Paul says in verse 8, I desire that all men pray.

[10:49] He doesn't use the generic word anthropos, which includes men and women. Instead, Paul uses the specific masculine noun for men.

Therefore, my reading of this verse is that in the act of public worship, only men should pray. That's what Paul says. I desire that in every place the men should pray.

Now, I know that people will immediately say to me, well, Murdo, what about 1 Corinthians 11?

Because in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul addresses the issue of head coverings.

And he says, every woman or wife who prays or prophesies must have her head covered. And from that, it's implied that women can and should pray in public worship.

But as Paul says, they must have their head covered. But you know, when you read through 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11, when you read that passage in isolation, it actually takes away from the thread of Paul's teaching as a whole letter in Corinthians.

[11:55] Because when you read on into 1 Corinthians 14, Paul has moved on from head coverings in chapter 11, head coverings in public worship in chapter 11, to praying and prophesying in public worship in chapter 14.

And he teaches there in chapter 14 that women should remain silent in public worship. Now, this doesn't, of course, mean that women can't pray at all because women can and should pray in certain circumstances and situations such as family worship, Bible studies and youth fellowship and Sunday school.

But you know, I don't want to get into disputes and disagreements about everything here. I've been in so many of them in the past. And what I've often found is that most people have already made up their mind on these issues before they even open their mouth.

But as Paul says, he says it himself to the Corinthians, don't make this a contentious or a controversial issue. Don't make this a contentious or a controversial issue.

But what I do find, and this is what I find very interesting, what I do find is that whenever Paul addresses areas relating to public worship, he bases his teaching, and you see that in 1 Corinthians 11 as well, he bases his teaching not on a cultural situation or on a church context, but he bases all his teaching upon God's ordained and ordered and organized creation.

[13:30] Everything goes back to the creation. That's what he talks about in 1 Corinthians 11. It goes back to the creation. Paul always brings public worship back to the creation.

And the reason he does that is because the Garden of Eden was the first location of public worship. The Garden of Eden was the first location of public worship.

The Garden of Eden was the first temple where God was worshipped in public. And Adam, the first created man, was the first worship leader.

Now, all that is a sermon for another night. We will look at that another day. But you know, as Paul teaches Timothy about the order and organization of public worship, he says, men should pray because that's God's ordained order and organization of church.

But when they pray, this is the interesting thing, when they pray, he says they should lift up holy hands, which means that lifting up your hands in prayer and praise, that's biblical.

[14:39] Absolutely biblical. And Paul mentions it here, and it's also mentioned in the Psalms that we're singing this evening. Lifting up hands in prayer and in praise.

Now, that doesn't sit well with us as reserved and reticent Scottish Presbyterians. To lift our hands in prayer and praise to God, it seems alien.

We're not all standing here singing with our hands in the air. And yet the Bible says it's biblical. To lift your hands in prayer and praise is biblical.

But of course, as Paul emphasizes here, our attitude in worship matters. And our attitude in prayer and praise also matters. Which is why Paul says that when it comes to public prayer, we're not to be angry or argumentative.

We're not to be doubtful or divisive in our prayers. We're to pray with one accord. No, Paul says, you know, our head, our heart, and our hands are to be holy when we come to God in prayer.

[15:56] That's a high standard. Our head, our heart, and our hands are to be holy when we come to God in public prayer. So my friend, when it comes to public prayer, we're to be reverent.

We're to be respectful in our prayers. We're not to be false or flippant. We're not to treat prayer as a shopping list of wants and wishes. No, prayer is a conversation with our heavenly Father, and yet at the same time, it's a petitioning request to the highest royalty.

So he's our Father and yet he's King and we have to get the balance, which is very hard. And you know, I'll be honest, the part of the service, I'm always most anxious and apprehensive about. Every service, I'm always anxious and apprehensive about praying publicly all the time. And as every man here will admit, it doesn't get any easier.

It doesn't get any easier. So women, consider yourselves getting off lightly. But you know, it is difficult. Even though public prayer is so difficult and daunting, it is the greatest privilege as well.

[17:11] It is the greatest privilege to lead a congregation to the throne of grace in prayer. And as men, we should always consider it a great privilege to lead our people to the throne of grace in prayer.

And so as Paul deals with these hot potatoes, he addresses women praying. And secondly, he addresses women preaching. So women praying and then women preaching. Look at verse 11. He says, Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. Rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. From 2008 to 2011, I studied for my first theological degree in Highland Theological College in Dingwall. It was my entrance degree to study in the Free Church College as a candidate for the ministry.

But when I arrived in HTC in 2008, I was only 21, and I was in the common room with some of the other students that were there. And one of the first people I met was a woman who was training to be a minister in the Church of Scotland.

[18:27] Now, before you have any preconceived ideas about this woman, I want to say that she was a Christian. She was an evangelical. She loved the Lord. She had a passion for the gospel. She wanted to make Jesus known.

And she was very open and very honest in our discussions. I was thinking about all these discussions that we had years ago. We discussed the God-given roles and responsibilities in the Church for men and for women.

In fact, what I found so funny when I was thinking about this is that when we were studying Paul's letters together, we were given a very controversial essay question. And the question was, was Paul a misogynist?

That was the question. Was Paul a misogynist? In other words, did Paul dislike and downgrade women? Did Paul see women as inferior and inadequate in the Church of Jesus Christ?

Did Paul see women as the lower and lesser sex in the Church? Was Paul a misogynist? And what was actually funny was that when we got our essay results, our lecturer said that there were two of us who studied that essay question.

[19:32] There was other essay questions you could study, but two of us did this essay question, and both of us came to completely the opposite conclusion. Of course, my take on Scripture is that Paul wasn't a misogynist.

Although many feminists and many liberals regard Paul as not only anti-gay, he's also anti-woman. And Paul is often accused of being, and to quote, this is someone, to quote someone, he's a crusty old bachelor who was very opinionated about homosexuals and women.

That's what some people view Paul as, a crusty old bachelor who was opinionated about homosexuals and women. But you know, nothing could be further from the truth, because everything Paul teaches here, it isn't based upon the context or the culture of the day, but upon God's created order.

Paul brings, as we said, he brings everything back to the order and the organization of creation. You see that there in verse 13. Adam was formed first, then Eve.

And so the basis of Paul's teaching here isn't confined to the context of the church in Ephesus, or even the culture of the day in the first century, because actually in the context and the culture of Ephesus, Jewish women had a low status among men, and Gentile women living within the Roman Empire had an even lower status among men.

[21 : 04] They were seen as absolutely nothing. And so what Paul actually does here, by drawing our attention to the order and the organization of creation, Paul reminds us and reaffirms to us, as the church of Jesus Christ, he says that the gospel makes women visible and valuable.

The gospel makes women visible and valuable. And this is actually something Paul emphasized time and time again. He explained it to the Galatians, where he said in Galatians 3, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And Paul was saying to them, you have been created in the image and likeness of God, so therefore, whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman, you are visible and you are valuable in the church of Jesus Christ.

You are all one in Christ. Which was something that was completely contrary to the context and the culture of the day. Not only in the first century, but also you could even say it in the 21st century. Because within even our own context and our own culture, today, there is inequality in the workplace and there is inequality with wages. But Paul says the gospel makes us valuable and visible in the church of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 38] Therefore, women, according to Paul, are valuable and visible in the church of Jesus Christ. But when it comes to the order and the organization of the church of Jesus Christ, it follows, as Paul says, the order and organization of creation.

Adam was formed first, then Eve. And this is why Paul says in verse 11, he says, Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.

Rather, she is to remain quiet. quiet. Now, when Paul says there, in the beginning of verse 12, I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority.

As it was with women praying, this isn't Paul's personal opinion. No, this is God's opinion. It's according to God's creative order and organization.

But as an ordained apostle and preacher in the church of Jesus Christ, Paul is emphasizing, he's explaining the God-given roles of men and women in the church.

[23 : 50] And you'll notice that Paul repeats the word quietly in verses 11 and 12. He says, Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness or all humility.

She is to remain quiet. Now, the word quiet doesn't mean that a woman isn't to talk at a Bible study or a fellowship.

The word quiet refers to the posture and the position of women in the church of Jesus Christ. I believe that Paul had in his mind the posture and position that Mary adopted at the feet of Jesus. You remember that as Martha stood to the fore, Mary sat on the floor. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to his teaching.

And when Jesus spoke to these two sisters, he said, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.

[25 : 01] Mary chose the posture and position of quiet and humble learning. And you know, what Paul is teaching here is that it's the posture and position of women that should be attractive.

The posture and position of women should be attractive, not their clothing or their costly attire. The posture and position of women should be attractive, not their clothing or their costly attire.

That's why he says in verse 9 that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness with good works.

Now, don't misunderstand Paul, as many people do, because there's nothing wrong with clothing or jewelry or makeup. That's not what he's saying. But he's saying it needs to be respectable. It needs to be modest.

There needs to be self-control. Because church is not the place where women attract attention by their clothing. It should be where women attract their attention by their character.

[26 : 15] You know, one commentator said, when a woman walks into church, people shouldn't be saying, wow, she's gorgeous. But wow, she's godly.

Wow, she's godly. And so Paul is explaining and he's emphasizing that women are not to exercise authority over a man, because that's the order.

That's the organization of God's creation. But just because women aren't given authority to teach, that doesn't mean that women don't have the ability to teach, because women are to teach. In fact, Paul insists that women are to teach. He insisted that when he wrote to Titus, Paul's colleague in the ministry. Paul said to Titus that older women in the congregation are to teach the younger women.

They're to take them under their wing, he says. They're to disciple them in order to, in order that the young women will love their husbands and teach their children. And Timothy himself was evidence of that, because he was taught by his godly mother, Eunice, and his godly granny Lois.

[27 : 26] And so although Paul taught that when it comes to public worship, women are not to pray or to preach, Paul still views them as visible and valuable in the church of Jesus Christ.

In fact, throughout his letters, you'll see that Paul applauds, and he even admires women for their contribution and their commitment in the church of Jesus Christ.

He mentions people like Lydia, Lodia, Syntyche. They were members in the church in Philippi. He also mentions people like Phoebe, and Junia, Mary, Tryphonia, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, and they're all part of the church in Rome.

They were female servants in the church of Jesus Christ. Not Deaconesses, but they were given a God-given role and responsibility to use their gifts in serving the Lord to his glory and the furtherance of his kingdom.

And so as Paul brings this second chapter to a conclusion, he's reminding young Timothy, he's saying to him, stay there, stand firm, stay focused, because prayer is priority.

[28 : 42] You have problems, Timothy? Prayer is priority. Prayer is particular. Prayer is for all people. And when you're conducting public worship, behave yourself.

Behave yourself. When you're in God's house, behave yourself. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray together.

Our Heavenly Father, we give thanks to Thee this evening for that wonderful reminder that we do not worship a God of chaos or confusion, but we worship a God of order and organization.

And we thank Thee for that reminder even through the creation that there are times and seasons, there is day and night, there is darkness and light. Lord, a God of order, a God who works all things together, a God who has brought all things together by the word of His power.

And help us, we pray, as Thy people, to reflect the order and the organization of our creative God in our worship. Help us, Lord, we pray, not to be chaotic or confused, but to worship God according to His will and His way.

[30 : 01] We confess, Lord, that we do not do it properly. And we pray that we would always come back to the Scriptures, that we would always be reminded of what Thou art saying, and that we would submit and surrender ourselves to the will and to the way of God.

Oh, Lord, teach us, we pray. Teach us to be more like Jesus, to follow in His footsteps, to live like He lived. And Lord, to live that crucified life, to be like the apostle, confessing the confession of the Christian and saying, I have been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Lord, bless us then, we pray. Lead us and guide us, we ask. And go before us, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to sing again this time in Psalm 63.

Psalm 63. It's in the Scottish Psalter. Yes? Just making sure. Psalm 63 in the Scottish Psalter, page 295. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 5.

[31 : 18] Before we sing, I just want to highlight a few prayer points. I won't give you a whole list. I felt bad last week giving you too many.

But as we were reminded on Sunday evening, when we had our Testament evening with Robin Gray, he asked us for prayer, to pray for him as the minister and to pray for his congregation. And they were also saying that they hadn't seen many converts or any converts in many years. So pray that souls will be saved in Gardentown as well as here.

That's what we want. We want more people to be added to the kingdom. So pray for Robin Gray in Gardentown. We're also encouraged this week to pray for Maryborough. And the minister of Maryborough is Alex Stewart.

He's been a minister there. I think he's been there about the last nine years. And also Hope Church, which is in Kirkmoor Hill and Blackwood. The minister there is Ian Watson. We had him on Zoom

probably last year during lockdown.

[32 : 23] So he spoke to us. So please remember these congregations. And also, not just a congregation, a whole presbytery. Remember the Sky Presbytery. I got an email the other day asking for to do supply in Sky.

And the reason we were given the email is because there's no ministers who are active in the Isle of Sky at present. The ministers who are in their charges are off sick.

One has had to remove himself from his charge. And the rest of the congregations are vacant. So every congregation in the Isle of Sky has an interim moderator. So pray for the Isle of Sky.

I mean, then I started thinking, well, you go ten miles and there are four or five of us here. And there's none in the whole of Sky.

And, you know, so we should pray for our neighboring island that the Lord would provide. And also restore to health and strength. Donny G is off sick. I was, myself and Kenny John were recording a service, 443.

[33 : 25] It will go out this Sunday. And so we're just trying to help one another. But please bear their burden in prayer. So remember the Sky Presbytery. So just to highlight these prayer points to you.

We're going to sing in Psalm 63 from the beginning. Lord, thee my God I'll early seek. My soul doth thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land. Wherein no waters be.

That I thy power may behold. And brightness of thy face. As I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place. Then he says, since better is thy love than life.

My lips thee praise shall give. I in thy name will lift my hands. And bless thee while I live. We'll also sing down to verse marked five of Psalm 63 to God's praise.

Lord, thee my God I'll early seek.

[34 : 27] My soul doth thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land.

Wherein no waters be. That I thy power may behold.

A brightness of thy face. Thus I have seen thee here to form within thy holy place.

Tis better is thy love than life. My lips thee praise shall give.

I in thy name will lift my hands. And bless thee while I live.

[35 : 48] Keep thus with marrow, and with heart. My soul shall fill in thee.

Then shall my heart with joyful lips. Sing praises unto thee.