

The passage we're up to today, isn't a common/popular choice in churches. And I was thinking back over my life as a Christian, and I cannot remember ever hearing a sermon (in church) on this piece of Scripture.:

- I've been in Bible Studies where we've discussed it;
- I've listened to **recorded** messages on it;
- I've encountered this scripture in Christian books;

But I cannot remember a time when I've heard it taught in church on a Sunday.

And I suspect the reason is 2-fold:

1. Some of it is very clear and very easy to understand. The problem is, it gives a message that many people don't want to hear; and
2. Some of it is not easy to understand. Especially V15, Bible Scholars disagree on what Paul is really trying to say, because he's not clear...

Anyway, I grew up in a mainline Denomination church, and many of the mainline Denominational churches, preach on what's called the revised common lectionary. It's a 3-year cycle, that gives a selection of readings such that over the 3 years, (theoretically) you cover the whole Bible.

And just for interest sake, I downloaded the lectionary to see when this passage is covered, and it's not. It just so happens that in September this year, is when the Lectionary turns to Timothy. But it only touches on 3 small sections of this whole letter.

It concentrates on the bits we want to hear, and discards the **majority** of the letter that many **don't** want to hear.

And so, by the time we get to Chapter 2, it covers V1-7 which is about prayer (and we covered this last week), and then it skips **everything** until part-way into Chapter 6. ...

So be prepared, the next 4 chapters will very rarely be heard in a church, because some don't like to hear it. Some will be offended by what this says. But as this is the Word of God, we're not going to skip over it, because if God has said it, we need to hear it.

And so we're going to read it; We're going to hear it; And we're going to wrestle with it (mind you, for "us to wrestle with it" is for us to shift our perspective, to gain God's perspective).

So, let's begin with prayer, and then we'll read it.

Heavenly Father,  
As we read this,  
and as we study Your Word today,  
we begin by surrendering  
our hearts and minds to You.

Lord,  
we know that Your word is perfect and true.  
We also recognise that at times,  
our attitudes and opinions;  
and even our convictions,

have been contrary to Your word.

And so,  
this is what we surrender to You.  
Our hearts; attitudes; minds;  
opinions; and even our convictions...

Lord, we ask today,  
that You would help us  
to receive and understand Your Word,

And that You would bring us to a place  
where this isn't a reluctant acceptance,  
but a joyful enlightenment;  
an ah-huh moment,  
where we see the beauty of Your design;  
for men and women,  
in Your creation,  
and in Your church.

Lord, give us the love of Christ;  
the mind of Christ;  
and the humility of Christ,

in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.

***Bible Reading: 1 Timothy 2:8-15***

## Righto:

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a life of holiness. As God's holy people, the way we live and the standards we adhere to, will be very different to the standards of the people of the world.

## Holiness means:

- we relate to God differently;
- relate to other people differently;
- priorities in our lives will be different;
  
- The way we speak and **what** we say will be different;
- Even what we wear will be different;
- And so, how we live will be different;
- how we die, will be different.

A couple of weeks ago (when we were last together) Paul was teaching us on prayer. And he finished off saying that those who pray (or more specifically, when men pray), it should be in Holiness. (lifting up holy hands) – Now, that's not about "showiness" – the focus is on the holiness... Our hands are to be holy – in other words, get rid of sin... If we do evil with our hands, and then we pray (lifting our hands to God),- something's very wrong with that.

And the characteristic of holiness (when we pray and when we worship), he now applies to women.

Now, there **really** shouldn't be anything controversial in this. If I was to summarise today's reading, it would be to say, "Let **men be holy men, and women be holy women.**"... And yet it **does** become controversial, because the way different churches interpret this passage, is quite different.

- At one end of the spectrum, some might write it off altogether.  
*"Well, that's a thing of the past – the product of a by-gone era, and we've moved on from that now".  
totally irrelevant, and that's why we don't read it; and*
- at the **other** end of the spectrum, every single word is taken very literally, and in some churches, women are 'dictated to' what they have to wear and how they do their hair, and they are forbidden (in some churches) from speaking at all...

And so, I'm probably going to upset **everyone** today. There's no doubt that some people will hear this message and brand me as a legalist/misogynist, and others will accuse me of being a godless liberal who doesn't believe the Bible...

Such is the road of anyone who has faith, to take the word of God seriously.

So, the first characteristic of holiness in women (this letter addresses), is expressed in their appearance.

Now, *when we see photos of celebrity pastors (husband and wife teams) of some well-known mega-churches, we might generally get the image that somehow holiness is displayed*

*with having a glamorous, desirable image... And for me, this confirms why passages like this one **need** to be read and taught in churches once again,, because the glamour image of celebrity pastors & worship-leaders, is the exact opposite of what we as Christians should be about.*

*When I was a **young** kid going to school, I used to love the opportunity of those rare uniform-free days... On the TV shows set in the US showed the kids that never had to wear a uniform to school, and I thought that was a great idea...*

*But by the time I got to mid high school, I'd changed my mind on that... You see, on the uniform free days, there became a noticeable divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and this was something that was more prevalent among the girls – it became a divide between:*

- *cool / uncool;*
- *glamorous / unglamorous;*
- *those who knew they were beautiful / who felt they were ugly...*

*And when I became a parent, I understood even better, why it is right for schools to have uniforms. Yes, it sets a minimum standard of dress, but more importantly, it also sets a **maximum** standard of dress...*

*And I remember back to the uniform-free days at the Goondiwindi State High School, and our indigenous class mates who didn't have anything else that wasn't thread-bare and tattered to wear. And so they came in their school uniforms, and stuck out like a sore thumb...*

*That was nearly 40 years ago, and I know things have changed now...*

But the question comes, “Ahh, What am I going to wear to church today?” For **most blokes**, that’s a simple choice: What I wore last week because my wife won’t let me wear my work clothes...

But women (and some blokes) take a bit more pride in their appearance, and they like to make themselves look nice.

So, how should one dress when one comes to church?

- in respectable apparel;
- with modesty;
- with self-control;
- with what is proper for women who profess godliness;
- **and** with good works.

Do you notice here, that the manner of dress of Christian women (women who profess godliness), could well be very different to the fashion of the day...

You see, what he’s teaching us, is we should spend more time and energy on our **spiritual** adornment, than on our outer adornment... And our clothing and our manner of dress, should reflect who we are (in Christ), and what we’re like, spiritually...

And so, when he says **not** to adorn oneself with **braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire** , it’s not that there’s anything wrong with having “plaited hair”, or having a bit of

basic jewellery. What he's really on about here, is "don't become a show-piece." "Don't come to church all doed up like a glamour model."

You see, a legalist would say, yeah right:

- no pearls;  
I'll wear emeralds
- No braids;  
I'll copy my favourite movie star (eye-catching, but no braids);
- No costly attire;  
I'll re-purpose that hot dress from lifeline.

That's how the legalist treats this.

Humanly speaking, many of us have a desire to be desired. There's no point to it. God loves us, without the bling. God loves us without the:

- celebrity hairdo;
- designer labels;
- sporting the latest i-device upon our person;

He loves us even if:

- we're a bit pudgy;
- scars & blemishes;
- we don't have a finely sculpted body

And if we are to live a **life** of worship, then what's suitable in worship, should be suitable in life. Alright, so this isn't about putting on sack-cloth to wear to church, and then getting blinged-up for the rest of life...

What a sad state the church is in, when Christian programs have a tendency to focus on body image rather than the heart. The attitude is: *“If we can make a person **look** beautiful, they’ll feel beautiful, and then we can connect them with God.”... Or: “If we can make them feel beautiful, they’ll feel loved...”*

God loves me, as plain as I am...

And I find myself wondering, “If Paul was to write this today, he’d probably write something similar to the men.” ‘times are-a-changin’. Men are getting caught up in this too.

In some church traditions, the image of the Pastor’s wife has been a glamorous one, but in this day and age of “image”, we’ve now entered the era of “the buff pastor” who wears the muscle T-shirt to highlight his buffness & muscles... And I see these pastors and think “Wow, they must spend hours in the gym” to tone those muscles...

And it’s all about image...

And just like the no-uniform day at school, the cool kids; the beautiful people excel in their image and it leaves others feeling, inadequate... And yet, some people put forward the argument, that their image is what brings people to Jesus... What Jesus are they coming to?

It’s quite astonishing really, that out of all of the writings about Jesus, we know very little about his physical description. The only description I could think of is in Isaiah 53:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> ...he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.

Jesus was a very ordinary sort of bloke. He **wasn't** one of the cool-kids; you wouldn't see him struttin'-his-stuff in His designer clothes...

What Paul's really saying here, is "Any form of ostentation (showiness) detracts from the whole purpose of worship."

Whether it's the glamour model, or whether it's the muscle t-shirt, it detracts from the whole purpose of worship. Because whether it's 'about the image', or whether it's having 'a desire to be desired', that has no place in worship. Worship, is less of self, and more of Him.

**And** the instructions he's giving here, is also for the good of the whole church.

As disciples of Jesus, we are a people who willingly forgo what we see as our freedoms. And we do it for the sake of the other. So when Paul says that **women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty** , (,,, he doesn't tell us this,,,,) but it's **also** for the sake of others.

When a young lady wears a revealing outfit, that causes men to admire her in ways that they should not: Some women are totally oblivious to the effect they have on men, and that the

way they dress, affects them; Some women are **very** aware of this fact, and they do it anyway...

But for the sake of the weaker brother – for the sake of the one who could be led to temptation,,,,, to dress respectably and with modesty, is the loving thing to do.

- A low cut top;
- a short skirt;
- figure-hugging outfit;
- bare midriff

doesn't help a bloke to worship God in holiness...

And while that might be the fashion of our peers, holiness means we dress in a manner that helps our brothers and sisters in Christ, with their holiness.

But it's not only about appearances – it's not just about what one wears.... It's also about attitudes of the heart: self-control; and good works. It is to be “spiritually adorned”, rather than “an adornment of appearances”.

Righto, let's move on: in V11, we move now, to the field of holiness in “learning”, “teaching” and “authority”.

In some cultures, including 1<sup>st</sup> Century Pagan cultures (in which Ephesus was), women generally weren't allowed to be educated – it was the men who did the learning. And that continues today – look at the Taliban.

*The Taliban forbid women from being educated. In Afghanistan, while the US and its coalition partners helped to contain the Taliban, women and girls **were** given the opportunity to go to school and learn and study... But when the troops were withdrawn and all of a sudden, the Taliban took control, they made promises that girls could still get an education, but they were lying through their teeth.*

But in the Christian church, even in a culture where it was uncommon for women to learn,,,, in the church, they could learn.

So, let's take this a verse at a time:

**V<sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.**

And “all” means “with the highest degree”. But what is that? To be submissive: It's not a rule that one is forced to obey – To be submissive, is an attitude of the heart. It's a voluntary willingness on the part of the woman. And so, it's not a rule that we can make and enforce – it's an act of holiness, in response to God...

In Ephesians 5, we're told to submit to one another in reverence to Christ. And so, submission isn't something that only women do. We submit to one another; and we submit to Christ, and we do it out of reverence to Christ. But in this case, women submit to quietly learning.

In V12 then, Paul explains how he applies this. He says: <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

Now, some people read the “she is to remain quiet” bit, and say “Right, women must not say anything in church.”...

So, let me clarify what he **is** saying, and what he is **not** saying... He’s talking about teaching and exercising authority over a whole congregation, which would include men, and he doesn’t allow that. What he’s **not** saying, is that women shouldn’t teach at all. He’s just saying that women shouldn’t be teaching men.

He’s **also** not saying that women have to be completely silent in church – they’re just not to be the teachers in church, or to interrupt a teaching session.

But why???

Well, the easy way around this, might be to say “this was a cultural thing” – in **their** culture, it was unseemly for women to teach men... But in **our** culture, not a problem...

But it’s **not** simply a cultural thing. He gives a theological reason – it’s to do with God’s ordering of creation.

V<sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve;

When we look back to the creation of humans, Adam was created first, and Eve was created to help Adam. She was taken out of Adam. But then, in Genesis, it’s only a few

verses after this, we see a reversal of the leadership roles that God had instituted, and it was disastrous.

V<sup>14</sup> and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

BTW, we're not saying Adam is off the hook and it was all Eve's fault (not at all). Adam sinned. And he bears responsibility for his sin. You see, Paul's **reason** is on the basis of God's created order, and then he **illustrates** this, with an example of the fall.

Genesis 3:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife

and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you,

'You shall not eat of it,'

cursed is the ground because of you;

in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

Adam knew what God had said. He knew God's Word on the matter "Do not eat from that tree"... But Adam failed to be the leader that God had created him to be. It was Adam's responsibility to say, "No, Eve. Remember, God said this". Adam failed to be the leader that his **wife** needed him to be...

And it's the same problem we have in the church today... It's becoming more and more common, for the teachers in the church to be the women. Do you know why? It's because we men have failed in the responsibility that God has given us to fulfill.

And so, today's message is as much to the men as what it is to the women... But let me be clear, the message to men is **not** "Lord it over the women and force them into submission" – that's not Godly at all... The message to men, is to step-up, and to be the loving, sacrificial, spiritual leader that God has called you to be.

Husbands, God's design, is for you to step-up to spiritual leadership in your house, but guess what: For you to be the spiritual leader, means you yourself have to:

- be close to God;
- know God;
- love God;
- regular and fervent in prayer;
- love His word, and not just read His word, but study His word;
- growing closer to God

If you are to be a leader, you have to be heading in the right direction... If you are not getting closer and closer to God, you cannot lead your family to God. If you are drifting away from the Lord, you cannot be a leader....

You see, rather than step up, most men go, *Oh, but it's a big job,,,,* And the women put us to shame. They **are** growing

closer to God (and good on them), and by default (the default of men), they become leaders and teachers...

Most Christian women I know, **crave** for their husbands to step up and be the leaders that God has designed them to be... **Men, they want you to do it...** But when men are not serious about their faith – when growing closer to God is not their priority, the order is reversed...

And so, there might be some men here who's going to say to me, but Michael:

- My wife, she knows the bible better;
- more articulate;
- better at teaching;
- more patient than me;
- more time than me – I just don't have time to do it...

My answer, is "Make time". What could possibly be more important in your life, than growing closer to God...

True worship, is for us to devote our lives to Him. I don't read too much in the Scriptures that tells us to:

- work harder;
- work longer;
- to 'getting ahead'

Our call, is to be **devoted** to our Lord.

And if anything I fill my life up with, means my devotion is to something other than God, something needs to change...

And so, God's created order, is for men to teach, and so the practice in the church, should be that women are not teaching men... And so, I want to encourage the women today, to encourage the men. Wives, encourage your husbands to lead, and to teach. Give them room to do that...

V<sup>15</sup> Yet she will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

That's a bit abstract...

Some apply it to Eve: Women were saved through the childbearing of Eve, because into her line, the Messiah was born.

Others take it quite literally: and so they bear as many children as they can, because this is God's plan and purpose for their life (to drive a mini-bus, full of kids)...

But be aware, that attitude can be very hurtful to the many women, who through no fault of their own, are unable to bear children.

And we know that it's **not** through giving birth that a woman is saved — it's through the cross and faith in Jesus. Bearing children doesn't make a woman any more saved or any more loved by God, than a woman who is childless...

I simply see V15 as giving an example of something which is distinctly feminine. Women, do not be ashamed of your femininity. God has created you to be a woman. It's saying that holiness (for a woman), is for her to be distinctly what a woman is...

Child-bearing is something that men cannot do – It's the domain of women. God has ordained it this way. And so women honour God, **not** by stepping into the domain of men, to teach men, but as a woman, who **continue[s] in faith and love and holiness, with self-control**

And so:

Men, being holy men, is about: Being devoted to God, in such a way that our faith and knowledge of God is firmed up, so we can teach.

Women being holy women, is about: Being a woman, in all of the beautiful, creative uniqueness of what God has designed you to be, and to **continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control**

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
We thank You for Your wisdom,  
and Your good design.

Lord, we thank you for the way  
that men and women, need each other.

Lord, our prayer is that  
in our families and in this church,  
that we could live lives of holiness,  
honouring you,  
in the way that You have designed us to be;

We pray,  
that the men would grow in their love  
and knowledge of You,  
and that we would be  
the leaders You have called us to be...

Sacrificial leaders,  
giving of ourselves,  
for the sake of others.

And that the women would also  
grow in the love and knowledge of You,  
Being the beautiful wonderful creation  
that you have designed them to be,

Not feeling that they're 2<sup>nd</sup> best,  
but having a holiness and a beauty  
that isn't an outward adornment,  
but a spiritual adornment of:

- faith;
- love;
- holiness; and
- self-control

in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.